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ABSTRACT

This issue of the "Journal of Children and Youth" focuses on problems with which parents and professionals will be dealing in the coming decade. What are the diverse needs of single parents, step-parents, and grandparents of which professionals should be aware? What is the role of parents in regard to television, sex education, public schools, and day-care centers? How can professionals support parents in these areas? These and other questions are addressed in 16 brief articles. An annotated bibliography of parent education programs is included. (Author/MP)

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JOURNAL OF
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

"Parenting in the 1980's"

Janet D. Hartman, Guest Editor
Maxine B. Markson, Guest Editor
University of Evansville

Fall, 1980

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Introduction. 1

Parent Education in the 1980's. 2
Kevin J. Swick, University of South Carolina and
Sheila M. Bollinger, Palm Bay Elementary School

Focusing on the Parent in Parent Education. 8
Judith Meyer, Pacific Oaks College

Community Mental Health Centers' Perspective on Parent Education. 16
Mark W. Stephens, Southwestern Indiana Mental Health Center, Inc.

Parents, Grandparents, and Teachers as Moral Educators: A Cross-Cultural View 21
Hanns G. Pieper and James J. Berry, University of Evansville

(Step)Parent Education: A Proposal. 28
Marilyn J. Coleman and Lawrence H. Ganong, University of Missouri-Columbia

Fatherhood: Past and Contemporary Trends in Parenting 38
Stewart Cohen and J. Michael Govia, University of Rhode Island, Kingston

Fathers as Active Parents: A Training Program 45
Kay Pasley, John Ernst, and James Gingles, Washington State University

Interaction of Self-Concept, Television, and Leisure Activities in Families with Young Children 55
James D. Moran III, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and Jane Vaughn, University of Oklahoma

Preparing Parents to be Sex Educators 60
Sally A. Koblinsky, San Diego State University

Page

Parent-Child Sex Talks: A Demonstration. 68
Milton L. Nolin with Elizabeth Anne Nolin, University of Nevada

Parents' Role in School Decision-Making. 77
Ronald E. Goldenberg, University of Evansville

Coordinating/Training/Utilizing Parent Volunteers. 80
Judith C. Reiff, University of Georgia, Lynn Gatchell, Barnett Shoals Elementary School, Lola Wells, Gaines Elementary School, Patricia Price, Gaines Elementary School, and Nancy Morgan, Gaines Elementary School

Helping Parents Set the Stage for Success in Reading 85
Rexel E. Brown, University of Evansville

Parent Participation in Day Care 94
Margaret A. King, Ohio University

An Annotated Bibliography of Parent Education Programs 99
Dorothy A. Dixon, University of Missouri-St. Louis

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"PARENTING IN THE 1980's"

The White House Conference on Families has resulted in a new impetus for examining the role of parents in the 1980's. Today's parents are faced with a kaleidoscope of family structures, school systems, and value patterns which must be put into perspective. Professionals who work with parents will be receiving more and more requests for guidance from parents. Likewise, parents will be demanding that various social institutions be more responsive to their needs.

This issue of the Journal of Children and Youth focuses on problems with which parents and professionals will be dealing in the coming decade. What are the diverse needs of single parents, step-parents, and grandparents of which professionals should be aware? What is the role of the parent relative to television, sex education, public schools, and day-care centers? How can professionals support parents in these areas? These and other questions are addressed in this edition and represent the key issues in parent education for the 1980's.

Editors

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PARENT EDUCATION IN THE 1980's

by

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The term Parent Education has acquired various meanings during the past decade. Those conference participants who attended the "parent education issues sessions" identified the meaning of this term as the initial issue. As one participant asked: "What do we mean when we talk of parenting and parent education?" Based upon discussion notes, the following are representative of the ideas exchanged during the small group session.

Parenting is certainly more than the physical act of having a child. It encompasses various roles that, unfortunately, have been taken for granted in our society. Any consideration of the true nature of parenting will reveal that many different people perform a myriad of roles that enhance the development and learning of young children: single parents, families where both parents share in the child-care process, single people who elect to parent, relatives who assume the parent role upon the death of a parent, and helping professionals who become identified as parents in institutional settings. Most of these individuals perform educational, social, emotional, and other support roles that enable children and other family members to function in positive ways and most would probably agree that they could benefit from something called parent education.

Parent education has, unfortunately, been identified with quick courses on parenting, short courses on natural childbirth, and adult education offerings on child development. While these events are "educational" they in no way encompass the meaning of parent education. Parenting, like all helping roles, is a developmental process which is best carried out under maximal learning conditions. Thus all experiences which enhance parents in being nurturant and functional are "educational" and thus useful in furthering child-parent relations. Informal experiences where parents share and help each other as well as formal courses with a specific focus would also be included.

Members of the SACUS 1980 parent education issues sessions identified as a major concern the current lack of adequate support structures for parents in our society. In many cases, business and industry are still insensitive to the needs of parents. This is evident in inadequate

maternity and emergency leave policies as well as the absence of flexible work schedules. The inclusion of the family in planning work place policies is urgently needed. The ecological picture in terms of governmental functions as related to parents and children is also lacking in substantive measures. Tax structures at all levels actually penalize people for becoming parents. What support structures do exist, such as aid for dependent children, often encourage the dissolution of families in order to acquire the money.

The most denigrating aspect of the current societal setting is that the parenting role is not included in our cultural setting as a valid undertaking. For example, the parent of a young child who elects to be at home during the early years are not viewed as contributing to the productivity of our society. And, the parent who does take a direct interest in their children's lives by becoming involved in school functions may be penalized by losing work time benefits such as overtime pay. Add to these factors that in some places in our culture "no children allowed" signs exists. One participant in the issues sessions noted a condominium that allowed dogs but not children.

When these issues are viewed as a totality, it becomes clear that a major issue of the 1980's is: Can we re-educate our society about the importance of parenting and parent education?

Related to the previous issue but of such importance that it remains as a separate issue is the question: Will all societal members accept their role in supporting parental efforts? Participants in the issues discussions noted that many current parenting programs were geared to the typical two-parent family situation and ignored the many other parenting styles in existence. One example of this phenomenon was cited as the teenage parent. While some federal programs have focused on the teenage parent, most local community groups have ignored the needs of this parental style. Similar situations exist in terms of the one parent family and surrogate parent families. A need exists, then, for all citizens to acquire a better understanding of the diverse needs of families and their role in supporting family life.

It was continuously noted by discussants that as more people elect not to become natural parents, they must be reminded of their part in the "parenting team". Parenting can acquire a more socially valued status when various members of the community become involved in supportive ways. Many opportunities are available in all communities to bring this "team" concept to a reality. Scout leaders, teachers, and nurses are examples of social supports for parents in which non-parents play a significant role. The use of senior citizens, high school students, and church members in parenting capacities such as "mother's day out programs", tutoring projects and recreation programs are means of involving citizens in caring capacities that are supportive of parents.

In a corresponding manner, the need exists to conduct awareness efforts that bring into focus the significant role parents perform in making community life a meaningful endeavor. While many professional and religious groups have used the media to focus public concern on the problems of child abuse, poor quality child care, and other child oriented problems, little emphasis has been placed on the role of every citizen in being supporters of parents. This is an important issue in the 1980's as research clearly indicates that parents who have a support system (friends who help, access to quality medical care, etc.) are usually effective in helping their children develop and learn in productive ways.

A major part of this needed reorientation toward parenting exists within societal structures such as the work place, hospitals, churches, schools, governmental programs and even in the demographic makeup of community settings. All of these institutions could make a major step forward by providing more "room" for parents to be parents in their institutional arrangements. Examples of support which these institutions could provide are listed below:

1. Sick leave policies which allow parents to use leave time to attend to a sick child.

2. Allowance for adequate maternity leave so that parents can have time to develop a basis for family life.

3. Provision of child drop-in care, counseling services for healthy and troubled families, and programs organized around family needs.

4. Schools that focus on the family as a primary environment for learning by providing programs such as extended day activities, flexible academic programs for teenage parents, and continuous communication modes such as conferences, home visits, and parent programs.

5. Programs which attend to emergency parent-child needs such as unexpected medical problems and unusual financial situations which seem to affect the very young family the most.

One of the issues which emerged from our discussions was the societal response to the dramatic increase in the number of teenage parents and the corresponding increase of infants born to very young mothers. It was unanimously agreed that this issue needed urgent attention. The immediate needs of teenage parents and their children in terms of adequate health care, parenting education, and support systems were cited as vital to any effective social program. Attention must also be paid to the parents of the teenage parents in terms of their coping with this situation in a constructive way.

While many schools have introduced parenthood education courses and/or courses in family living, it was the consensus of the discussants that too often these efforts were too little and too late. A selected concern that we dealt with was that parenthood education must be more than a course of study; rather, it must be an integral part of life. Learning how to be a parent begins at birth and extends throughout the life cycle. The processes of learning to care and respond to the human needs of others (which are an integral part of parenting) must be acquired as an on-going part of life. Thus the preparation of parents needs to begin early and permeate our entire social structure rather than inserted into a course or two in junior and senior high school.

The issues discussed in the parent education sessions were all related to a common theme: Improving the quality of life for parents and children. Policy decisions regarding parent education must be made with the realization that "quick fix" approaches will not work. A long term committment is needed to facilitate positive social attitudes toward being a parent and to bring about a cultural support system that increases the possibilities of successful parenting. Specific policy decisions should focus on the following directions for parent education in the 1980's:

1. The societal values toward parenting must be made more positive through substantive changes in our taxation policies, health care approaches, work place functions and overall contextual settings in which parents and children operate.

2. Parent education and parenthood education efforts must be integrated into the entire community arrangement rather than isolated into courses of study and other sporadic efforts.

3. The dramatic changes that have taken place within the structure of family life and the unique problens which future parents will face must be incorporated in parent education programs.

4. A team approach to parent education is needed to offset the fragmented system that currently exists.

5. Community awareness of the role of every citizen in participating in the nurturing of young children is necessary. With an increasing number of people electing not to be parents, it has become extremely important for non-parents to be educated in the roles they can and should play as a part of a parenting team approach.

The general consensus of people involved in the parent education discussion groups was that current public policy, while well intentioned, is often detrimental to the entire setting in which parents function. As we enter the 1980's public policy makers must be cognizant of the needs of parents as they occur in the real-life settings of different communities. Progress can be made when parents are consulted and involved in the decisions which effect their lives and the lives of their children. Only then can parent education become a meaningful endeavor.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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FOCUSING ON THE PARENT IN PARENT EDUCATION

by

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I believe that many parent educators, although well-intentioned, sometimes do a disservice to the parents they wish to assist. Often this occurs when the professional places the primary emphasis on the child's developmental needs and neglects to deal with the parent's own issues. The result is that parents who have not had support to maximize their own growth are not prepared to adequately enhance the growth of their children. When parental development is seen as a parallel issue of equal importance to the child's and, in fact, facilitated by the process of child-rearing, the parent educator implements a dual-leveled approach that has exciting potential for children, parents, and families. My interest is to examine the particular kinds of parental growth that can be facilitiated through interaction with a child. I believe that such growth is essential, so that parents may become more supportive of children's needs and provide more effective models of what it means--in the richest sense--to be human.

In order to fully address the parent in parent education, it is necessary to separate child-rearing and parenting issues. When I work with parents I suggest that they too will find it helpful to conceptualize the differences between these. I therefore address both parents and parent educators regarding the kinds of growth that may be triggered in the progress of being a parent. I write both as a parent and as an educator.

My interest in parents stems from my belief that being a parent provides a unique opportunity for us as adults to grow and change, to come into new awareness of who we are, who we have been and who we may become. While I can't recommend having a child for the purpose of self-realization, once the child is a fait-accompli the possibilities for growth exist and I am eager that they be made explicit. This is why I insist that parenting and child-rearing issues be separated, that we don't blindly accept a definition recently perpetuated in our society, which is, "The good parent is one who knows child development and responds to the child's needs." This only addresses the recipient of the parenting--the child--and says nothing of what is involved in being the parent. I want to explore the experiences that may evolve for the person in the process of child-rearing that facilitate adult growth and which may have a profound yet indirect affect on the child's development.

One of the most exciting things about being a parent is that it offers the chance to get in touch with important aspects of life through interacting with the child. I don't suggest "living one's life vacariously through one's children." I mean, instead, that as my child deals with his/her developmental issues, I too am forced to relate to these issues.

While I cannot change what has happened to me in the past nor how the past has influenced me in the present, I can change my present and future responses to new situations.

An example: the first time my two year-old looks me square in the eye and says determinedly, "NO!", I am instantly in touch with my own ways of responding to authority. I may find I have a surge of unexpected feelings: a rush of how it felt to be two and so defiant, fear of the consequences and retaliations of such defiance, and outrage at this present challenge to my authority. While these reactions may be confusing, particularly as I try to figure out what to do in relationship to the child, they do grant me that unique chance to connect my past with my present life. As an adult I can become aware of my internal two year-old, who is frightened of defiance as well as excited by it, and I begin to learn how those two year-old processes operate in me. I can begin to know that two year-old and learn to respond to its needs and wants, and to some extent, I begin to rear myself. I can be in touch with those two-year-old feelings at the same time that I seek out new or more effective ways to function in situations containing defiance and challenge. I suddenly have new awareness about myself and new choices to make. I have power over my responses to the world and I am no longer unknowingly locked into childhood modes of functioning, for I bring consciousness to my actions. This may all begin with listening to my two year-old's "NO". A writer on child-rearing would explore what to do with the child. My interest is in what we as parents may do for ourselves.

In order to look more closely at the relationship between child-rearing and adult development, let us focus on the issue of separation. As the care-giver of a child, whether an infant or an adolescent, I need to be sensitive to the process of separation. Understanding the bonding that occurs between mother and infant, and recognizing that the child's perception of the world is greatly influenced by the adult-child interaction during the first three years, I will know that separation for the young child--whether for a few hours to shop or a few days to vacation--may be extremely difficult. As a sensitive parent, I will acknowledge that my protesting child is not "just spoiled" and I will be aware that my going leaves the child vulnerable and afraid, so I will be as supportive as possible. Likewise with an adolescent, I may find it useful to know that a major task during adolescence is separation from the family, and that much of the behavior I find so difficult--scorning of family values and flaunting of independence-are simply signs of that impending separation. All this information is useful and may indeed influence my behavior as a parent. But does it speak to <u>my</u> issues as a person? NO!

My issues are related, but distinctly different from these child-rearing ones. As a woman, the first and most dramatic separation I experience with my child is the separation at the time of birth, when the child first leaves me and my body. There is, of course, an earlier separation, the sperm from the testes and the ovum from the ovaries, and then the joining and the bonding of the two, and I take part in that and

in the following nine months of gestation. That growth period includes both the physiological growth of the fetus and the physio-psycho-social-spiritual growth in me as I change from "woman" to "woman-mother" or perhaps to simply "mother" as my way of identifying myself. Major changes occur. For nine months I share my body and space most intimately with another and allow that other to be totally dependent on me. No one (not even in this age of technology!) can take my place and I am the single-most important person in another's life. And then birth--separation.

The birth allows me, for the moment, to be part of a miracle-in-action. A gift, the child, is presented to the world. The cost is separation, and both mother and child are affected, for they who were one are now two. So there is separation and a new joining. Klaus (1976) has looked specifically at the process of mother - infant bonding, and it is psychologically and physically a reality--but it is new, it is external, it is very different from the first nine months and there is in fact a separateness that did not exist before. I, as mother, experience the child as external to me, and I now have more choice about how I respond to its demands than I did during those gestation months. I also have a choice about how I respond to this new bonding and how I conceptualize this new label "mother". How bonded am I to my new role and what meaning do I wish to give it? What does the bonding itself mean to me?

While there is a good deal of build-up in our society towards the birth process--baby showers, prepared childbirth classes, exercises to help with relaxation--no one ever tells us that birth is just the first visible step in the on-going process that is both parenting and separation. Callahan (1973) mentions that our aim as parents is to work ourselves out of a job--and she's right! Our goal is to rear our children so they may take care of themselves without our help, and this means one separation after another. Again, the "how to parent" books will tell us a lot about what is happening with the child. As the infant moves out of the dependency of the first year of life and enters toddlerhood, the word "no" is continually heard--a sign that this toddler is testing out his/her physical separateness from mother and the ability to maintain control over his/her body. The intense peer relationsips of the school-aged child signal another growth in independence as the child develops a separate social culture with its own rules and ways. The teen defies family norms and establishes his/her autonomy of values, and moves towards separateness and independence. Later the child enters adulthood and works to become financially independent, a process that may take a long while in these inflationary times.

This is what is happening to the child. And what of the parents, the mother in particular? How does she fare with these never-ending separations? She may be finding them difficult, particularly if she has primarily defined herself as caretaker of the children for a number of years. (Notice the word "define"--there is many a woman who has held a responsible, challenging job in the work world who still defines herself first as "mother.") The issues with which she must deal are complex as she continually faces the need to let go of the child. Even thinking about this "letting go" process means one must separate oneself from the situation and acknowledge the boundary that exists between mother and child. I have to acknowledge the "me" that is independent of my role as mother

and independent of my feelings for my child at this moment in order to conceptualize the situation.

During the first months of my child's infancy when the bonding is most intense, "separating out" can be difficult. It is easy for me to believe that how I feel in the present is how I will continue to feel as "mother" throughout parenthood. (Remember when you felt that being a parent meant you would NEVER get to sleep past 6:00 a.m. again, and now with teenagers, you are wondering if you can EVER get the kids up and going before noon?) There is nothing wrong with these feelings as such. However, they may lead us to assume that we really and truly will feel "this way" forever, which does not help us prepare for the next changes we must face. It is helpful to know enough about child development to be realistic in our expectations of "what comes next." This separating also involves knowing ourselves deeply and being willing to invest in our own growth and development as persons, which is usually both exciting and demanding work. Let us continue with the issue of separation as our example.

Since each of us is unique and knows the world in our own way, I cannot outline a process that will be true for everyone. Instead I offer some possibilities that may touch you in your growth towards letting go from your children. Some that have been important to me are: my sense of trust in the world, memories of past separations, my identity as a person and the rewards I find in the role of mother, the sense of myself as a complete, whole person, and my experience of life as a process.

My general sense of trust in the world and in myself will greatly affect my ability to separate from my children. If life has proven to be difficult, I will of course want to protect my children. I do, however, have choices about how I handle child-rearing situations and will know that "hanging on" is only a limited solution. Allowing myself to re-examine feelings of distrust, to check to see if I am responding to the world as it is today, to consider if my expectations are realistic and to decide what it is I want to teach my child, are all ways that may lead me to make better child-rearing decisions and to know myself better.

Often my feelings of distrust can be traced back to early experiences with separation. If as a child I did not have adequate opportunities to build trust in my parents, both in terms of their reliability in caretaking and in returning after leaving me, I probably found separation exceedingly difficult. If I was often frightened and felt abandoned as a young child, I may be overly protective of my child, not wanting him/her to suffer as I suffered. Or, as a defense against remembering those past traumatic separations, I may as a parent, be underprotective, saying, "This is how I was raised and it didn't hurt me any." A third option I may take is to acknowledge that separation is a difficult issue for me, and one that I must face before I can satisfactorily take a position on it. Acknowledgement that this is "my issue" may be the most important work I have to do--I can then stand back from my child and figure out what my external child needs, instead of responding to what the needy child within me wishes she had had in her own childhood. Good cues that some-

thing is indeed "my issue" are the intense wish to prevent my child from suffering or a beligerent "That's how I was raised..." attitude. If either of these approaches comes out strongly, I can be pretty sure that I have something I need to work through. It's the intensity that counts, for it indicates that I'm projecting myself on to my child, putting myself into the situation AS THE CHILD, thus impairing my ability to function effectively as an adult.

How I identify myself as a person will also plan an important part in determining my ease in the process of letting go of my children. It is possible to be totally immersed in a particular phase of mothering. Then the question becomes, am I so tied to my identity as mother of this child at this particular age that I cannot let him/her grow beyond this point? Are the rewards so great that I do not want to give up this stage? Perhaps I not only don't want to give up this time, I'm going to hang on to it like crazy! If I'm at the "hanging on like crazy point" I may be in trouble, and will most certainly struggle with my child as she/he gets ready to move on to the next stage. Awareness will be useful to me, and for awhile I may simply want to notice (without judging) the ways I hang on to my child: what it does for me and the child, how it feels and what the consequences are. Then I may decide to let go of some aspects, if that is my choice. Self-nuturing could also be important in this process. How else (besides hanging on) can I get rewards for being who I am? What else can I do that will give me some of the "goodies" I want from the world?

The "rewards" may come in many forms. For the woman who is fortunate enough to be able to be home with her children, it may mean that centering her life around child-rearing gives her an opportunity to do many things she likes to do. She may love creating children's toys, talking with others about child-rearing, exploring art materials with her children, volunteering her skills for school activities, or taking gangs of kids to the beach. To another, it may mean putting off the question "What am I going to do with my life?" in terms of obtaining job training or pursuing a challenging career. Still another woman may find she can escape learning to care for herself by plunging into taking care of her infant, and letting her partner, parents, or society to be in charge of proving financial and other supports. Since our children keep growing, none of these ways of avoiding our own personal question of identity can be successful. I think we owe it to ourselves to address this question early on, so that we can maximize our options and take time in making choices about, and getting prepared for, "what comes next." This may allow us to enjoy more thoroughly the parenting we do, for we know there is more to come and we are ready for it.

Feeling complete in oneself as a separate and unique individual is not easy. The socialization process in our culture leaves many of us with the belief that we are not "whole" in ourselves--that purpose and meaning in our lives will come only through a relationship with another and that there is another person "out there" who will make us complete.

(If you doubt this, turn on the radio to a popular tune station and listen to the lyrics, or watch the TV ads. Almost everything is geared to pleasing the other so that you can be validated.) The purpose of that "other" is to validate me, to tell me that I am indeed lovable, likeable, competent, worthy, and have purpose in life. While a certain amount of outside feed-back is important, I believe our culture goes overboard in this direction. Of course I need validation, and a good deal of that can come from me, rather than some other person. I know when I've done the best or most thoughtful or most careful job I can do. I know when I'm learning and growing. I know when I'm offering support to another. I can acknowledge myself!

The question is one of balance. How can I learn to give myself more of the validation I need to keep me going? If I can do this, I give myself must more power to determine how I feel about my own life. If most of my validation comes from another, I give them the power. Giving my child the ability to validate me as a "good parent" gives that child a lot of power. A temper tantrum at the wrong place or a carefully placed mournful shrug can leave me desperately wondering, "What did I do wrong now?" The answer to that question may very well be "Nothing" and I may get to that answer if I ask it of myself. If I ask my child, the answer will be, "You didn't let me..." and I'm not going to get any validation at all. My ability to separate from my child will be closely linked to my skills in affirming myself. I need to retain a sense of myself as whole even when the child says, "It's all your fault..."

When I experience life as a process I am aware of my own growth cycles and the way certain themes reappear again and again. I am aware that child-rearing too is part of a process--at best one that moves in the direction of teaching both my child and me to become more fully human. With this perspective, I can let go of specific expectations. My investment in life does not become this child doing or being a particular thing at any exact moment. Instead I invest in the process of continuous growth and development. I see my relationship with my children as moments of coming together and parting, of agreeing and disagreeing, of teaching and learning, of closeness and distance. There is not a right form or a beginning or an ending. There is an on-going commitment both to the moment, to living it fully, and to the relationship that emerges from and is contained in the moment. There is the sense of separateness, from my children and me, and of connectedness, my children and me. We are growing, each in our own ways, and in relationship.

Initially we differentiated between parenting and child-rearing issues, and that was important in order to look at the adult growth that may occur through parenting. Now we come full circle to acknowledge the intimate commections between the two. My concerns as a parent will often be more than child-rearing ones, and they may often be stimulated and clarified by my interactions with my children. How I work through my personal issues will affect my child-rearing responses as well as my own

development. I work to enhance my own growth so that I may be more fully myself--more productive, more creative, more sensitive, more resourceful. I then have more to give my children, that together we may be more fully human and make our mutual contribution to ourselves, our family, and our society.

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COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTERS' PERSPECTIVE ON PARENT EDUCATION

by

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Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) are much involved in parent education. Their perspective on what to do and how to do it is likely to be quite different from that of other educators. This paper offers observations based on that perspective. It is not intended as a prescription for others but for the heuristic value there may be in viewing old ground from a new perch.

CMHCs' mission, by act of Congress, is to "prevent mental illness and promote mental health", as well as to help people who already have problems. This is why we who work in community mental health centers are so heavily involved in parent education. We see it as in the first line of defense for prevention. It may also explain our perspective: our concern is solely with prevention of emotional and behavioral problems, i.e., the emotional well-being of the child. For that reason, the following isn't necessarily relevant to parent education aimed at fostering cognitive development, or at guiding moral development (per se), or at health, safety, nutrition, etc., but only at meeting the emotional needs of the child.

The Emotional Context for Teaching Parents

There have been two "discoveries" in the mental health professions in the past decade or so which have profoundly changed our perspective on parent education:

1. The Emotional Interdependence of Family Members

   Clinically we have come to see our client as the family, not the child or the parent. This insight has come primarily from family therapists of different theoretical persuasions. It has been confirmed to a greater or lesser degree by the great majority of mental health professionals. The impetus is not a romantic yearning to glorify family togetherness, but decades of frustration in trying to help individuals embedded in families simply as individuals, and observations of family dynamics and family change afforded by family therapy.

   Characteristically we are brought a single family member. He may be an underachieving or misbehaving or withdrawing child, an alcoholic or philandering or somatizing father, a Valium-addicted or depressed or unsatisfied mother. This is the

"symptom bearer", the one who the rest of the family can say is "not OK" so they can perpetuate the myth that the rest of the family is OK. Ultimately it becomes clear that all in the family are hurting and all are contributing to the problems and that to help one is to help all but to try to help only one is to swim upstream.

The implication for parent education is direct. If we are to enhance the emotional well-being of the child, we must equally consider the emotional well-being of the parent. In fact, it often may pay off best for the sake of the child to focus on the needs of the parent. Regardless of the information and understanding parents have of the emotional needs of the child, it may be that their own emotional capability of meeting these needs is the primary determinant of "good parenting".

2. The Joys of Parenthood

The awful irony is that the primary threat to the emotional well-being of parents is parenthood itself. The myth persists that parenthood means joy, fulfillment, and other good things--period. This may all be true but the period. The American Psychiatric Association (1980) in its official, new Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Third Edition) classifies "birth of a child" as a "severe" emotional stress for adults, father as well as mother. Divorce rates leap for parents of young children, as do rates of emotionally-related physical disorders. Survey after survey finds that couples without children say they are, and in every way act as if they are, happier than do couples with children.

The reasons are worth enumerating. Beyond the sleep loss and diaper-dipping, there is an overall massive decline in the quality of life characterized by a calamitous restriction in energy, time and privacy, a consequent disruption of sexual and recreational satisfactions, less opportunity for the couple to communicate about self and other, and financial hardships seldom fully anticipated. The marital relationship as it was is dead, and will never return as such; and this is at least sensed, if not admitted. The new relationship can be more profound and fulfilling than the old relationship, but this can only be hoped, not known, when stresses are greatest. The stress is compounded, of course, by the myth that it isn't there, or at least isn't much, or isn't important. It could be lessened by education to the contrary.

Implications

These phenomena suggest the following:

1. To best help the child it is more important, ordinarily, to help parents with their own emotional needs than to impart information or skills in parenting, important as the latter are.

2. Any educational activity which increases a parent's guilt, sense of burden, or feeling of failure is likely to do more harm than good. (Parents in fact often tell us that parenting books, columns, classes, and talks tend to leave them feeling worse--"Here's something else to worry about"; "Here's something else I should be doing.")

3. Consequently, the most urgent part of a parent education curriculum may be a candid discussion of parent needs, of the stressfulness of the developmental tasks confronting parents and the normalcy of their responses to these stresses, and of the need for parents to be "good parents" to themselves first.

   Dealing only with parenting may reinforce the destructive myth that parenting is the most important thing in life for parents. Parents may need particularly to be reassured by parent educators of their worth and value as persons, non-parent persons, and the primacy of the person role to the parent role.

4. This implies a need to assess the needs and barriers which parents have regarding parent education. This may in turn implicate new technologies and vehicles for parent education programs. Three examples will suffice.

   a. Some CMHCs have established a telephone call-in information/advice service, free and anonymous, for parents. This is personalized and limits the overgeneralizations and misinterpretations of advice columns and books; more importantly, the parent can ask her/his own questions. The anxiety which parents may have about going to a mental health center or even committing themselves to a parenting class or book is reduced.

   b. Other CMHCs have facilitated the development of parent-cooperative drop-in centers for preschool children. These are aimed at the trapped mother, especially the socially isolated mother. She can leave her child there if she wants to go shopping unimpeded, or go back to a quiet apartment, or just talk with other mothers in the next room. Any given center may be open only two half-days a week. The child care service is coordinated by a trained person, paid or volunteer, committed to be there every day the center is open; but the child care itself is the responsibility of the parents, cooperatively, taking turns at taking care of each other's children. How is this relevant to parent education?

First, it is meeting the emotional needs--respite, social contact, mutual support--which parents have. Second, it enables building appropriate expectations, regarding both child and self, from sheer observation, with gentle supervision. Third, it turns out that the mothers ultimately do, on their own safe turf, ask for someone to talk to them about how to handle temper tantrums, after first asking for other discussions about dieting, dressmaking, and other matters.

c. A third medium geared to parent needs may be public-access television. Again, some CMHCs have already exploited this, as have, of course, other organizations. Even zero-budget productions which are not slickly produced may be far better than traditional out-of-the home educational technologies, especially for parents whose experiences with authorities may leave them lacking trust and therefore needing to be able to control the "relationship".

In all these examples there may be a loss of control by the educator. Curriculum, continuity, and maintenance of priorities as determined by the educator may be sacrificed. This is a big price to pay. It may be worth it, for some parents, at least.

Other Observations

Another phenomenon CMHCs have observed in working with parents individually as well as in groups is how passionately some are looking for a reassuring orthodoxy. Unfortunately, the purveyors of parent education books and curricula tend to meet that need. It would appear that such is good marketing strategy. It is easy to find rabid loyalists to the various schools (Rogerian, Adlerian, behavioral, or other) which have developed parent education materials. There are real dangers in this. For one, this inflexibility sets parents up for disillusionment with all help when the chinks appear in their gospel. Worse, it encourages them to overlook or deny the chinks longer than they would otherwise. It is anti-intellectual, as is any orthodoxy, in discouraging inquiry into other points of view. Perhaps worst of all is that all these orthodoxies forcefully convey a surrogate religion, a set of values and metaphysics of man, which is tacit and seldom recognized as such. As such it preempts value judgements which cannot validly fall within the expertise of the mental health professional or parent educator. The problem, of course, is not that the values expounded (tacitly) are likely to be offensive, but that the values not expounded, tacitly or otherwise, are implicitly rejected or downgraded. There is no empirical justification for these value choices.

Conclusions

Another awful irony is that parents who most seek parent education are those who least need it: educated, motivated parents who place high value on parenting and are sensitive to their children's needs. A corollary is that those who need it most tend to be least able to accept and use it: abusing and negligent parents, teenage parents, parents whose emotional problems dispose them to especially destructive relationships with their child. CMHCs' first priority must be to try to find effective ways of reaching this most needful group. The second priority must be reaching those who will most profit from parent education, a group which may be neither the most needful nor the most easily reached. But in no way is it appropriate to leave unserved anyone seeking parent education. This is indeed "promoting positive mental health" for both child and parent.

As truistic as it may sound, there is an urgent need to combine the skills and knowledge of the adult educator and the mental health professional. The need is known in CHMCs; and we would like to think we have something to offer others. It is part of our mission to assist others involved in parent education. Beyond individual cooperation, organizational resources can often be effectively pooled. Speakers, workshops, and classes can be co-sponsored by universities or public schools and CMHCs, or team-taught by their respective staffs. From this we would learn from each other; we might also present a more broad-based and attractive message to uncertain parents.

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PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, AND TEACHERS AS MORAL EDUCATORS: A CROSS-CULTURAL VIEW

by

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One of the primary functions of the socialization process in all societies is the transmission of fundamental values and norms from generation to generation. If society is to prosper and remain stable, there must be an orderly transmission of values and norms, particularly those pertaining to morality. What appears uncertain, at least in our society, is the nature of the institutional vehicle responsible for this orderly transmission.

Gallup Polls have surveyed the public's attitude toward our schools over a number of years. In 1975, eight out of ten persons polled favored "instruction in the schools that would deal with morals and moral behavior." The 1980 poll revealed virtually identical attitudes on the part of the public. To a greater or lesser extent, schools in our society have traditionally played a part in the moral education of children, as illustrated by the McGuffey Readers. Yet both teachers and parents have also voiced misgivings concerning the role of schools in moral education. Teachers often feel that the duty of teaching moral values to children properly belongs to the parents, who are now attempting to abdicate that responsibility to an already overburdened teacher. Parents, on the other hand, often feel that the schools in our society have long played a key role in this area and would be failing to fulfill a basic mission by not continuing to do so.

Perhaps neither view is correct. While there is a paucity of studies in this area, a case can be made for the assertion that in many societies and in past generations in our own society the moral upbringing of children was the responsibility of neither parents nor teachers. Rather the teaching of moral values was principally the domain of grandparents.

A glance through the cross-cultural record confirms the observation that grandparents have often been responsible for the teaching of values to their grandchildren. Olsen (1976) emphasizes this aspect in his discussion of the role of the grandmother in Taiwan. Sangree (1965) notes for the Tiriki of western Kenya that grandparents command a major share of a child's instruction in both everyday technical skills and social obligations and attitudes. Among contemporary Menomini Indians of northern

Wisconsin, children spend almost as much time with their grandparents as they do with their parents. Spindler (1963:389) relates that "Grandparents still tell children 'bedtime stories,' and adults in the group remember when their grandparents told them stories. 'Grandmaw told us kids a story every night before we went to sleep. First thing next morning she would ask us what the story was about. If we couldn't tell her, she would tell the same story again the next night. She would do that until we could tell her what the story was about.' What Grandmaw was looking for was the moral point of the story. 'that we shouldn't offend anybody's feelings,' or 'not to envy what someone else has got.'" Accordingly, much of a child's early informal education comes from grandparents. Beginning at about the age of eight, the Menomini child begins to receive formal moral instruction in the form of preachings from an older person, usually a grandparent. This instruction in adult virtues and responsibilities continues until the time of marriage and focuses on marital responsibilities, laziness, ritual duties and prohibitions, sexual behavior, gossip, generosity, emotional control, and duties toward the elderly and in-laws.

That grandparents should assume the role of moral educators is to be expected in societies where the extended family is strong. In contemporary agrarian societies (as well as in the early history of the United States), parents of both sexes have vital economic duties to perform; time for the instruction of children is minimal. Grandparents, on the other hand, are no longer an integral part of the family economic unit and have the time to devote themselves to this purpose.

Moreover, it can be argued, parents and teachers in most times and places cannot be expected to be as effective moral educators as grandparents. Children may resist accepting moral teachings from the generation that punishes them, no matter whether the punishers are parents or teachers. So commonly is there antagonism between adjacent generations that there is a widely-noted structural tendency to form an "alliance of alternate generations" within the extended family (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952). Grandparents and their grandchildren share a common resentment toward the middle generation, which usurps the powers of the former and dominates the latter. Out of this common resentment develop common goals and affection. Grandchildren bind themselves to grandparents who not only share their feelings but also just happen to be living repositories of history, myth, experience, and "wisdom." Thus it is not surprising that in many societies the grandparent bears much of the responsibility for inculcating values and ethics in the grandchild.

The events surrounding industrialization, however, have had a major impact on the structural relationsips between the generations. As children migrated to industrialized urban areas to seek their fortunes, the three-generation family began to fragment, interrupting the systematic transfer of knowledge between the older and younger generation. As Gans (1962)

has pointed out, this spatial fragmentation was temporary: inter-generational contact began to re-appear as the flow of migration slowed down. However, during this transition period the nature of the inter-generational contact changed from frequent, formalized and often highly ritualized interaction. Under the new conditions it became more difficult for grandparents to assume their former roles as moral instructors. In short, the structure of our society has changed to the point where the older generation can no longer perform the role of cultural transmission--beyond occasional stories of what it was like to be a child in the "old days."

Our thesis, then, is that neither parents nor teachers have abdicated or are abdicating the responsibility of moral education. Rather, neither has yet moved to fully assume the role that was taken away from the older generation. In a very real sense, our society is changing in a vital area of socialization which may have great ramifications for the effective internalization of values and the pace of social change.

In our socially heterogeneous society, any of four institutions could assume this socializing function: government, religion, family, or schools. Political institutions in our society can for all practical purposes be eliminated from further consideration. Few persons in a democratic nation would find it acceptable to have government agencies determining and directing the moral education of their children. In fact, in the 1980 Gallup Poll only 9% of the public stated that the federal government should have the greatest influence on what is taught in schools. The remaining three institutions are all viable alternatives, and in fact all three are involved in the teaching of values. While religion is a most powerful source of cultural norms there is a major drawback in relying on religious institutions to fill the vacuum. This problem relates to the fact that participation in religious activities is voluntary--in other words, not all persons participate in these activities and hence are not exposed to this socialization process. From a societal standpoint it is not enough to have only some members of society well aware of acceptable values and norms. Society must aim at total socialization if the negative impact of deviance and conflict is to be minimized. It would appear, then, that the family and the schools are the most logical alternatives, since virtually all members of our society participate in both these institutions at one time or another.

We suggest that, while both institutions (along with religion) must play a part in the teaching of values, the primary responsibility for this instruction must be assumed by the family while the schools occupy a secondary position. There are several reasons for this.

1. Many, if not most, basic values and norms are transmitted in the early stages of primary socialization which occur before the child enters the school system. Society can hardly be expected to wait to begin teaching values until the child reaches school age. The teacher must therefore be

consigned to a reinforcing role. (This point does, however, raise some interesting questions about the appropriate role of the day care teacher who may in fact be a powerful parent surrogate.)

2. If the schools were to become the primary agents of value transmission, controversy would inevitably arise over which values to teach. In a culturally heterogeneous society such as ours it would be quite difficult to define a set of values which would be valid to all social classes and ethnic groups.

3. It is questionable whether the school systems can do more than build upon the foundation of values laid by parents. While the roles of teacher and pupil are clearly complementary, their interaction is not without a great deal of potential conflict and stress. The balance of power is clearly tilted in the direction of the teacher and generally those in subservient positions harbor some hostility toward those who control their behavior so completely. It is unlikely that the socializing power of the teacher, parent or even grandparent could successfully compete with the social influence of the peer group. In short, moral values must be implanted before the rebellious impact of the peer group becomes a major factor.

4. Finally, the teacher-student relationship is a secondary one. Interaction tends to be segmented, formalized, and relatively impersonal. Although much information can be quite successfully transmitted in such a setting, we seriously doubt whether such a setting is appropriate for the presentation of information which is deeply personal and by definition involves all aspects of one's life.

The role position of parents and the nature of the parent-child relationship also presents obstacles to the teaching of moral values. However, there are also some decided pluses which render the parent the more effective socializer. Children in our society are almost totally dependent upon their parents for a long period of time. While this may engender hostility, it also gives the parents a tremendous amount of social power, particularly over the younger child. This power is in turn transferred to the values being taught by the parent, making them seem extremely important in the eyes of the child. The relationship between parent and child is a primary relationship which is based not only on power imbalances but also on mutual affection and desire to please. In such an atmosphere, we submit, moral or personal values are much more likely to find acceptance than in the relatively impersonal atmosphere of the classroom.

It seems to us that at this point in our societal development parents are the most appropriate units of society to fill the gap left by the changing role of grandparents. We frankly doubt whether the parents can fill this role as successfully as the grandparents. Grandparents enjoy a special emotional closeness and consequently have a social edge in facilitating value-internalization. Grandparents often have a more balanced perspective on life and thus may place more emphasis on basic, rather than fleeting, values. Grandparents have more time, since economic factors have once again created a situation in our society where both the mother and the father are frequently necessary components of the economic unit. Demands of job and family often conflict. But, with the extended family relegated to our past, the grandparents are no longer there to help out and the parents have inherited the job by default.

Our discussion of moral education would be incomplete without at least the brief mention of some variations on the nuclear famly in the United States. One potential solution to the problem of the inculcation of moral values in children is the family network (Stroller 1970) or family cluster (Pringle 1974). Such a network comprises a circle of two to four families having regular, frequent contact with each other for the purpose of exchanging services and engaging in relations of emotional reciprocity. Stroller believes that the expressions of differences in values and attitudes lead to the formation of new systems of values in each of the familes. Another varient on the nuclear family has been called the affiliated family (Clavan and Vatter 1972). An affiliated family is made up of a nuclear family plus one or more older, but unrelated persons. Such a family is united by voluntary commitment of the members to responsibility for one another and has the advantages of mutual proximity and flexibility. Both types of family, but particularly the latter, resemble the older extended family through the creation of voluntary ties among individuals living in an urban context. And, to the extent that the responsibility for transmitting moral values to the youngest generation is shared among the adults, the process is made more effective, certain, and stable.

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(STEP)PARENT EDUCATION: A PROPOSAL

by

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Each year approximately half a million adults become stepparents (Glick and Norton, 1973) to an estimated one million children (Maddox, 1975). At least ten percent of all the children in the United States under eighteen years of age live with a stepparent with some estimates being as high as fifteen percent (Maddox, 1975). If present divorce and remarriage trends continue, approximately twenty-five percent of all children growing up in the United States today will have a stepparent (Furstenburg, 1979).

Many stepparents have not previously had children and even fewer have experience at stepparenting. Students have indicated stepparents encounter the same difficulties biological parents do and, in addition, they must deal with unique challenges related to the stepparent role (Visher and Visher, 1979). It would therefore be logical to conclude that even as transition to first-time parenthood requires adjustments of biological parents (Russell, 1974), the equally abrupt transition to stepparenthood may also require adjustments. Unfortunately, training and preparation for stepparenthood is almost nonexistent.

Stepparenthood is poorly defined. Role expectations are seldom articulated well by step-family members, leaving steparents to struggle alone for a satisfactory role definition (Draughon, 1975). Socialization for steproles is minimal and often negative, causing difficulties in role adjustment (Kompara, 1980). The legal rights and responsibllities of stepparents are only vaguely understood by family members. Legal, religious, and educational systems add to the stepfamily's confusion by ignoring, explicitly or implicitly, the existence and legitimacy of such "blended" families.

The model of stepparenting in American culture has been a negative, problem-oriented one. Fairy tales abound with "wicked" stepmothers, and "stephood" is used as metaphor for being neglected, abused, unwanted and unloved. That the orientation to stepparenting in western culture is negative is fully reflected in even our most common language. For example, a recently defeated politican who believed he had been slighted by party regulars and the media was quoted as saying, "I felt treated like a stepchild" (LaGesse, 1980). Social and behavioral scientists base hypotheses concerning step-

relationships on the assumption that there will be dysfunctions, despite studies indicating little difference in functioning between stepfamilies and intact families (Bohannon, 1978; Duberman, 1975). The pervasiveness of this paradigm of stepparenting seriously effects both stepfamilies and helping professionals. Focusing on deficiencies inhibits perceiving and facilitating individual, interpersonal, and familial strengths that may be present in stepfamilies. This may lead to self-fulfilling prophecies in which stepparents or those dealing with stepfamilies (e.g., school personnel) are quick to perceive and accentuate problems and, in the relative absence of real problems, create imaginary ones (Bohannon, 1978).

The primary orientation to stepparenthood has focused on remedial assistance rather than preventive education. The clinical approach has predominated in professional literature on stepfamilies. Much of what is known about stepfamilies comes from books and articles written by helping professionals who have emphasized the therapeutic needs of their clinets. Education focusing on potential, strengths, problem prevention, and development of stepfamily effecttiveness has basically been ignored.

We would like to propose an educative preventive model of intervention for stepparenthood that would focus on developing strenghts as well as alleviating problems. Parent education has been successful with a variety of parent groups: such as biological parents, foster parents, parents of handicapped children, and single-parents. We feel parent education is an appropriate vehicle for preparing stepparents and their spouses to parent more effectively.

Our proposed model of stepparent education has two primary instructional components: (1) awareness and information (2) skill development. The major emphasis is on awareness and information. It is our belief that little is known about step-relationships in our society by those people who are intimately involved--teachers, school counselors, youth group leaders, and even stepfamily members themselves. What is known about stepfamilies could be labelled as myths, folk beliefs, or common knowledge.

Awareness and Information

The main focus of our model for stepparent education is on deprogramming unsupported, but firmly held, folk beliefs and replacing them with information based on systematic analyses and empirical research. E.E. Lemasters (1974), in a frequently quoted work, has identified myths of parenting in general. Parents have indicated they feel less guilty when such folk beliefs are exposed for what they are - myths. If demythologyzing parenthood is helpful to intact families, a group even

more in need of having the myths exorcised are stepparents and their spouses.

What are the myths of stepparenthood and stepfamilies? The following are some of the most prominent:

Myth 1. "Stepmothers are wicked and discriminate against their stepchildren in favor of their own children."

This myth is learned at very early ages from tales of Cinderella, Snow White and the Brothers Grimm. Stepmothers have traditionally been portrayed as jealous, wicked, evil, scheming witches. Research reveals, however, that stepmother-stepchild relations are generally satisfactory to both (Duberman, 1975). The "wicked stepmother" myth may have developed because stepmothers and stepchildren often do not develop relationships as emotionally intimate as the stepchildren had or have with their biological mother. In Western culture the mother's role is central to the family system; even fathers do not compare favorably to biological mothers in closeness to children. The majority of stepmothers have been successful in filling a role in which they will almost automatically suffer by comparison.

Conflict may occur between stepmother and children within the home because the parenting responsibility most often falls on her shoulders. Mothers, biological or step, usually are assigned major responsibility for caregiving, and conflicts are most likely to occur between those intimately involved with each other. The stepmother and/or stepchild may be hypersensitive about an issue or conflict that would be disregarded as a normal upset in the biological relationship.

Myth 2. (a) "Stepparents have a difficult time learning to love their stepchildren."
(b) "Stepchildren and stepparents should love each other immediately if not sooner."

The second myth consists of two opposing notions of love between stepparents and stepchildren. On the one hand this myth dicates that stepparents should love their children while on the other hand assuming they will fail. Such noncongruent mythical expectations concerning love can create unnecessary stress in the early adjustment period of stepfamilies.

According to Myth 2a, stepparents fall in love with a person who has children so they must, often reluctantly, learn to tolerate the stepchildren. Loving the stepchildren thus is purported to be the hardest task in the marriage for a stepparent. In reality, most stepparents report little difficulty in learning to love their stepchildren. There is a greater probability that they will err in the opposite direction by trying too hard to show their concern and love in an effort to elicit loving responses from the stepchild. It appears to be far easier for stepparents to develop love for the children to than it is to learn to discipline or communicate with them.

The myth of mutual, instant love (Myth 2b), is also damaging. Encouraged by television shows like "The Brady Bunch" and "Eight is Enough," this myth creates false expectations and causes conflict between stepparents and stepchildren as well as disappointment and guilt for both when love is not attained instantly. Stepchildren typically have love and loyalty for an absent biological parent. Pressure to immediately feel and demonstrate love for a stepparent may result in the child's rejecting the stepparent in an attempt to resolve feelings of loss, torn loyalty and confusion. Once they have developed a stance of rejection of the stepparent, it may be difficult for them to "love face" by reversing their position (Visher and Visher, 1979).

Stepparents may also have difficulty with immediately loving their stepchildren. Such things as initial rejection by the stepchild and emotional strain dealing with the child's biological noncustodial parent, in addition to normal parent/child conflicts experienced in all families, all take their emotional toll. Stepparents who have no children of their own may have had very limited previous exposure to children in general. Learning to tolerate and become adjusted to children would surely seem reasonable preluded to a loving relationship.

Myth 3. "Stepchildren resent and dislike their stepparents."

Many variables affect whether or not a stepchild likes or dislikes a stepparent. There are, of course, cases in which this myth may be reality. In the vast majority of situations, however, stepparents are well received. Some students indicate preschoolers and adult children are quite accepting of stepparents (Bohannon, 1978; Duberman, 1975). School age and adolescent children apparently have more difficulty accepting stepparents, but soon adjust if stepparents are aware of their special needs and concerns. Evidence from research is that children need: time to grieve for the family breakup, the "death" of their family; time to resolve handling divided loyalties, time to gradually figure out new sibling positions, their role in the new family structure, and new family traditions (Visher and Visher, 1979). Realistic expectations for behavior and emotional responses are necessary for stepchild adjustment and acceptance. For most stepchildren, stepparents become valued role models, active caretakers, friends, and advisors. Remarriage is often welcomed by children and stepfamily ties are eagerly anticipated.

Myth 4. (a) "Most stepparents usually adopt their stepchildren."

(b) "Most stepparents don't adopt their stepchildren because of the loss of child support."

The fourth myth, like the second, has two facets. These two myths have to do with the legal, custodial relationship of stepparents and stepchildren. Most stepparents do not adopt their stepchildren for a variety

of reasons, even though that might be their wish. The primary reason that most do not adopt is that a biological parent of the same sex as the stepparent is usually still alive and legally is the child's parent. This is true since the majority of stepfamilies were formed after divorce. Rarely do noncustodial biological parent terminate their relationship to the child, which would be necessary if the stepparent is to adopt. Biological parents divorce their spouse, not their children.

Child support is seldom an issue. Most custodial parents do not receive support from the noncustodial parent--only about 44 percent are awarded child support and less than 47 percent of that group actually collect it on a regular basis (Gates, 1977).

Stepchildren may also not want to be adopted. They may have a desire to keep their last name. It's unlikely they will want to sever ties with a divorced or deceased parent.

What is overlooked in these myths concerning adoption is the fact that stepparents and stepchildren have no legal ties. The implications of this are of major significance. The absence of a legal relationship means steprelatives are denied the rights and privileges of biological relations. Thus, a stepparent who has raised a stepchild from infancy could lose custody of the child on the death of the spouse. Children in such cases have even been returned to a biological parent previously judged by the courts to be "unfit" rather than allowed to remain with a stepparent. Stepparents also lose legal visitation of stepchildren if divorced. The effects of this legal impermanance extend to emotional and affectional aspects of the relationship; the stepparent may maintain emotional distance from the stepchild because of the tenuous legal nature of their relationship. Only recently has the legal system addressed this serious issue.

Myth 5. "Stepchildren have more emotional and behavioral problems than other children."

This myth has been fostered by certain of the professional literature on stepparent-child relations. Much of this literature was written by psychiatrists and social workers who based conclusions on their clients. Since well-adjusted stepchildren seldom come to the attention of those in the helping professions, little has been written about them. Existing empirical research does not support the myth that stepfamilies is miniscule, however, and results are mixed. Some students report poorer mental health consequences and lower self esteem for stepchildren, some have found stepchildren to be better adjusted than those in unhappy homes, and some have found no differences. Research concerning heterosexual relationships, school adjustment, sibling relations, attitudes toward marriage, and social functioning report similarly contradictory results (Espinoza and Newman, 1979). Arguments can be made that stepchildren learn to be adapting, effective persons because of their life experiences just as arguments can be made asserting that stepchildren suffer from their experiences. As Skolnick (1978) has so aptly stated, children are more durable and flexible than adults like to think. In general, there seems to be little basis for a gloomy prognosis of stepchildren's social/emotional behavior.

Myth 6. "Stepfamilies are just like other families."

Obviously there are many similarities between intact families and stepfamilies. Both families may do daily chores, support community activities, attend church or synagogue, belong to PTA, enjoy family outings, quarrel and laugh with each other. However, there are critical differences that should not be ignored.

First, in stepfamilies the biological parent-child relationship predates the marital relationship. The stepparent becomes an addition to a previously formed family system. Stepparents who have biological children of their own are also part of another previously formed relationship. In intact families the basic unit is the spousal relationship; the child is later assimilated into this unit to form an intact nuclear family. In the stepfamily a spouse-parent is assimilated into a unit already consisting of one parent and a child or children (single-parent family). The histories of the intact and step-family are thus quite different.

Second, instead of a gradual progression of roles from dating partners to marital partners to parents, the adults in a stepfamily assume multiple family roles from the onset of marriage. Stepparents therefore have more complex roles to assimilate and less time for adjustment than parents in intact families. Intact families have a gradually evolving history and children do not have memories of a previous primary family unit. Stepfamilies also have histories that gradually evolve but family members have important memories of a prior family group. Stepfamily loyalty, therefore, is sometimes divided between two family groups. This is not to imply that stepfamilies cannot be close, integrated well-functioning families. They certainly can and do become cohesive groups. A critical difference is that stepfamilies must achieve cohesion and integration whereas cohesion in intact families may evolve seemingly without effort.

A final difference is in the number of parenting figures. Intact nuclear families have two parents, whereas stepfamilies may have three or four adults involved in parenting, two biological parents and one or two stepparents. Even when a biological parent has died, the influence and psychological relationship continues. Discipline and decision-making about childrearing may be more complicated in stepfamilies. There may be rule, authority, and boundary questions raised in stepfamilies that wouldn't be raised in intact families. There may be problems stemming from the single-parent family phase that are difficult to solve in the new stepfamily relationship. It is most accurate to say stepfamilies have the same problems and joys of intact families, but with greater complexity. To argue sameness is to deny crucial differences. Stepfamily adaptation depends on accepting these differences and building on the strengths of the stepfamily.

Skill Development

The second aspect of the model, skill development, is equally important. The primary objective is to help prospective and current stepparents and their spouses identify areas found by clinicians and researchers to cause conflict in stepfamilies to avoid such difficulties. Potential solutions and ways to avoid problems should be shared by members of the group who have successfully dealt with similar situations. The following is a suggested list of topics to cover:

1. Discipline of step and biological children.
2. Family rules and boundaries.
3. Names stepfamily members use to address each other.
4. Stepsibling rivalry jealousy.
5. Marital relationship of the parents.
6. Expectations about responsibilities and duties of all family members.
7. Expectations about affection between family members.
8. Role of the noncustodial biological parents in the new stepfamily.
9. Visits by nonresidential stepchildren.
10. Holidays, school conferences, etc.

There are numerous models of parent education (PET, STEP, behavior modifications). We would recommend that the model selected be one that concentrates heavily on developing skills in communication. Homework requiring daily practice of communication skills should be an integral part. The communication models we have found most useful and clearly explained are those of Bandler and Grinder (1975), and Guerney (1977). Education for stepparents should also include decision-making skills that emphasizes the marital relationship since the ability of parents to "parent in the same direction" is vitally important. Biblio-education can also add an important dimension to an education for step-parenting model.

In parent education, as in any adult education, participants learn better when a variety of instructional methods are used. Brief lectures, brainstorming, discussion, and question-and-answer sessions are appropriate methods for the awareness and information section. Films or filmstrips may be used as well. Viewing live and videotaped models demonstrating certain skills, role-playing, and homework assignments are effective methods in developing skills. Parent education methods should be chosen based on learning objectives.

Stepparent education does not have to be long in duration to be effective. Five or six well-organized sessions of 60 to 90 minutes are sufficient to accomplish a great deal of learning. Short-term programs with carefully specified objectives have the highest attendance and lowest attrition rates. Successful brief parent education efforts often lead to requests for more programs.

Parent educators should no longer ignore stepfamilies. The large and increasing numbers of stepfamilies in almost every community attest to the need for stepparent education as presented in the model outlines here. The myths and ignorance surrounding this family form are harmful and should be dispelled. The place to begin is with the stepfamilies themselves.

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FATHERHOOD: PAST AND CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN PARENTING

by

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The place of men in the lives of children has undergone considerable change over the course of time. From their unprecedented power over the fate of human life in ancient times, to the present, where males approach fatherhood with trepidation and apprehension, the role of fatherhood has shifted dramatically. Currently, most men see themselves principally as breadwinners, and occasionally, as role models. Yet, relative to mothers, fathers are portrayed as being less nurturant, less interested, and certainly, as less involved with their children. As such, their role in child-rearing has reflected a belief that they are less competent than mothers in caring for their children (Young and Hamilton, 1978; Parke and Sawin, 1976).

Preparation for Fatherhood. A variety of influences reinforce the above portrait. The preparation of males for fatherhood, certainly, proves to be wanting. Unlike young females who, by virtue of their affiliation with their mothers, learn to anticipate motherhood and its accompanying role expectations, males are not generally provided with this experience. According to Weitz (1977), one unfortunate consequence of early sex-role affiliations is that males acquire a secondary role affiliation relative to parenthood. That is, males find that principal care-taking activities are granted to the mother with the father relegated to a secondary, "helping" role. The assumption by the father of a more central role in child-rearing is apt to raise some question regarding his masculinity. Chafetz (1974) and others have noted that young males are not only provided fewer opportunities to behave in a caring, nurturant manner toward others, but they experience less positive regard for exhibiting such prerequisites of parenting as patience, delay of gratification, acceptance of others, and the recognition of individual needs and differences. Similarly, Goldberg (1977) suggests that males are actively discouraged from exhibiting dependency or other needs for affiliation with others.

Another significant factor affecting the preparation of males for fatherhood is the awareness of the dearth of precise, well-defined expectations or standards for fathering behavior. Fasteau (1976), for example, notes that boys are not customarily provided an opportunity to play with dolls. Moreover, this experience yields a disillusionment with, and distance from, caretaking and caregiving which, according to Farrell (1975), can lead to a disenfranchisement of man's equal rights to parenthood, both its joys and its sorrows.

Fathering: Then and Now. The path of fatherhood has taken many turns over the course of reported history (Lynn, 1974; Nash, 1976). From its most powerful and seemingly limitless authority, as exercised during the periods of the founding of the Roman empire, to its current, ambiguous times, fatherhood has continued to shift both in value and influence. During the days of the early Roman empire fatherhood afforded males practically absolute power over the lives of their children. The Greek patriarchy, for example, could refuse to accept a newborn child as a member of his household, in effect, condemning the child to death through abandonment. And of course, early Hebraic history suggests that fathers, under the commandment of God, could sacrifice their children in worship, as Abraham offered Isaac, without fear of retribution. With the rise of the nuclear family, the growth of industrialization, the enactment of child-labor laws and compulsory education, and the emergence of the feminist movement, the patriarch's control over his family, children and women included, declined.

Our contemporary perspective of fathers is shifting. His authority is no longer absolute in family matters, nor is he the sole or major source of influence over his children. These changes have lead some modern observers to write of the decline of the father, the difficulties in finding him, and to question whether fathering itself is a factual occurrence or fable (Green, 1977; Stein, 1977). In contrast, another group of writers (Biller, 1971; Biller and Meredith, 1974; Lynn, 1974; and Lamb, 1976) have through their research suggested a different conclusion. Indeed, they find fathers not only important and capable in the performance of child rearing functions, but also, in many cases, effective as co-equal participants in the process of their children's development. Where divorces have taken place in which children are involved, the number of men who have begun to assume responsibility for the care and development of their children has increased (Mendes, 1976; Orthner, Brown, and Ferguson, 1976).

Recent Research. The role of the father in early parent-infant relations is one of contemporary interest and discovery (Lamb, 1976; Lamb and Lamb, 1976; Lamb, 1978, Parke and Sawin, 1976; and, Frodi and Lamb, 1978). Two kinds of questions have pervaded inquiry into father-infant relations. The first is: What consequence, if any, do fathers play in the lives of their young offspring? Lamb has summarized major findings pertaining to the role fathers appear to play in the early personality development of their children. He noted in his examination, that infants became attached to their mothers and fathers at approximately the same time (i.e., between seven and thirteen months of ages), that infants do not, within the age period specified, show predictable preferences for either parent, and finally, that within the second year of life, male infants show preferences for their fathers.

The other question raised by father-infant relations has been comparative. Lamb indicated that the roles of fathers and mothers are distinct. Fathers engage in more physically stimulating, aggressive, and less conventional forms of play than mothers. Additionally, when

mothers and fathers interact with their infants, they not only involve them in different forms of activity, but also exhibit different reactions to that activity, as well as different kinds of contact. The differences are quite apparent. Mothers, more often pick up their babies for caretaking purposes, and more frequently prohibit them from exploratory behavior, particularly around potentially dangerous activities. In contrast, fathers most often hold their infants in order to play with them, or pick them up when the infant him/herself seeks proximity or demonstrates wanting to be held. For example, according to Parke and Sawin (1976),

> "(a) fathers are interested in newborns and, of provided with the opportunity, do become involved; (b) fathers are just as nurturant as mothers in their interactions with newborns; (c) fathers do apparently engage in less caretaking, but; (d) fathers can be capable and competent in the execution of caretaking activities."

The mother-child relationships has been recognized as the principally significant bond formed during the child's first decade of life, thus minimizing the importance of the father-child interaction. Evidence supporting this belief is multifold. First, information on the influence of fathers upon their children's development is limited to several well-defined areas of interest, for example, sex-role development, academic-intellectual performance and moral development. Second, a significant portion of research has relied upon maternal reports as the principle source of information concerning the formation of father-child relations. Third, considerable information pertaining to the effects of father absence upon children's development has been accumulated without forming a comparable base of information reflecting the influence of father presence. Finally, many myths concerning the nature of parenting among fathers still exist.

Knowledge of father-child relations, while incomplete, is growing. Moreover, within those areas that have been studied some interesting, and potentially significant data have been compiled. In addition, the process of reassessment of the paternal role has begun. Alternative ways of evaluating the father's principal functions and different models for portraying his real contributions are being sought.

Fathering: Direct and Indirect Effects. Fathers may play involved as well as distant roles relative to their children and families. A direct role may be defined as one in which a father, through his individual participation, attempts to fulfill or advance his child's physical, emotional, or intellectual growth. The actualization of direct influence, however, frequently varies among fathers.

In single parenthood, a father's influence is likely to be quite direct, reflected by his involvement in all phases of his child's life, including his attempts to meet basic emotional and physical needs. In

shared parenthood, a father will normally assume some portion of the responsibility for child-rearing. Consequently, fathers provide varied degrees of influence depending upon their involvement, as well as the existence and direct participation of other caretaking agents. In most contexts, where men and women assume complementary familial and vocationally-directed sex-roles, a father's degree of influence is often far less than the child's mother. However, by virtue of his infrequent interactions with his child he may exert a novel, contrasting, counterbalancing, or normalizing role of influence. By definition, novelty reflects degree of involvement. Consequently, if his participation in child rearing is limited, a father may be viewed as a unique stimulant of intrinsic interest, or as a dark and distant figure of indeterminable influence. In terms of contrast, since he is different from other parenting figures, particularly the mother, a father can provide a strong or weak complement to other major or minor socialization agents. In either case, these differences enable the child to broaden his understanding of the human environment. Contrasts also allow for a counterbalancing of influence across persons. The imposing or negative qualities of one parent can have diminished impact where alternative behavior is displayed by the other. In addition, fathers allow for normalcy. From an economic perspective, shared parenthood offers greater financial security to the family and its membership. Finally, shared parenthood most closely approximates our social expectations concerning the nature of family composition. As perceived by children, and most adults, a father's presence offers a "total/complete" family constellation.

Indirect or mediated effects of fathering refer to those changes in development which the father precipitates by his support of human resources and/or provision of material goods which direct affect the child during the course of his development. In most instances, the principal source of indirect influence associated with fathering is the emotional support a husband may offer his wife, including the direct effects such transactions may have upon her, as well as those perceived by the child in terms of his qualitative appraisal of their relationship. The father's direct participation in the birth of his child and his positive evaluation of his wife's parenting skills testify to his significance in contributing to maternal effectiveness (Parke and O'Leary, 1976). Alternatively, the quality of the conjugal relationship, which a male supports through his multiple interactions with his wife, will affect the mother-child relationship as well as serve as a model of marriage and family relations to be emulated.

Fathering: A Final Note. Fathers form an important part of the interpersonal and supportive milieu influencing and surrounding the growing child. In the course of this paper some of the contributions which a father may make have been examined as well as the variety of roles which he may assume. Specific points which have been addressed were:

1. Men are socialized in a manner which minimized their sense of involvement in child-rearing activities.

2. The role of the patriarch in ancient times seems to have been very well defined whereas the expectations of today's fathers are not as well defined.

3. Recent research suggests that although fathers can and do interact competently with their children when given the opportunity, it is the mother who is seen as primarily responsible for child-care.

4. A father's degree of direct involvement with his children influences the child's expectations about the nature of the family composition.

5. Indirect influences of the father on the child are mediated through the husband's emotional impact on his wife and the subsequent effect which that has on the growth and development of the child.

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FATHERS AS ACTIVE PARENTS: A TRAINING PROGRAM

by

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Introduction

Since the early 1800's support groups and parent education opportunities have been available for mothers (Pickarts & Fargo, 1971; Wallat & Goldman, 1979). Most of these programs assumed that the primary responsibility for care of the children was the mothers, particularly those children who were very young. A similar emphasis on the maternal roles is evident in social science research on parenting and childrearing; that is, most investigations of the parent-child relationship have in reality been investigations of the mother-child relationship. Even studies attempting to develop the paternal scale of the commonly used Parent Attitude Research Instrument (PARI) excluded fathers (see as examples Schluderman, 1970a, 1977).

Most recently, interest in the father's role in the family and in child development has increased. In fact, Lamb (1979) labeled this period "the era of paternal rediscovery." Lamb and Lamb (1976) have proposed that if fathers were encouraged and reinforced to assume more responsibility for the socialization of their very young children, the incidence of marital conflict engendered by a baby's birth might decline, the quality of the father-infant interaction might improve, and the marital relationship might become stronger.

The hypothesis that active participation by fathers in child-rearing could have positive effects on family relationships is supported by current research. For example, when parenting was shared by the husband and wife, family life satisfaction remained positive throughout the life cycle (DeFrain, 1979). Also, when fathers assumed a more active role in parenting, stress in adjustment to fatherhood and the triadic relationship was lessened (Went & Crockenberg, 1976).

It is probable that encouraging father involvement in the life of young children is valuable to the child and the family unit. For example, Lamb and Lamb (1976) have noted a need for programs to legitimize and validate fatherhood, i.e., a father's ability and willingness to actively participate in infant care. Similarly, Fein (1976a) has suggested that men who are "initiated into fatherhood in the delivery room instead of the waiting room, are looking for support to develop roles as nurturant and involved fathers." The Father-Infant Program at

Washington State University was designed to encourage such paternal involvement by educating and training fathers to interact with and better understand their infants.

Community Needs and Resulting Program Design

The Pullman, Washington community offers a variety of opportunities for mothers interested in family life and parent-child relations. One of the most popular programs in the community is the Parent Cooperative Pre-Schools for parents and children (six months to 5 years of age). These preschool programs are designed primarily to meet the needs of non-working mothers as they usually operate during the morning hours, excluding males with morning work commitments and the large number of families with dual-employment or dual-career work patterns.

In the Pullman community no program has existed for fathers to learn about parenting, infant care and development, or about their role in enhancing the development of very young children. In light of contemporary changes in sex role attitudes and behavior and the broadening roles for women, it was determined that there was a significant need for a program to provide the encouragement, education, and support fathers required in order to become more active parents.

As a result, the Department of Child and Family Studies, the Psychology Department, and the Common Ministry developed a program for fathers and their infants (3 to 8 months of age). The program attempted to accomplish four specific goals: (1) to enable fathers to gain skills in promoting all aspects of their infant's development; (2) to assist fathers in developing an awareness of materials, activities, and experiences suitable to their own infant's current stage of development; (3) to provide resources and a support group for fathers based upon individual needs; and (4) to provide an opportunity for fathers to meet and share experiences with other fathers having infants of a similar age.

General Program Design

The Father-Infant Program consisted of six two and one-half hour structured sessions, a series of weekly letters sent to the participants, and a resource book developed for the program. The structure of the six Saturday sessions included five phases: check-in, sharing time, empathy training, songs and exercises, and a special topic presentation. A more detailed discussion of the structure is provided later in the paper.

The weekly letters were designed to personalize the program for each participant. The letters served to demonstrate the facilitators' interest in the father and his infant and contained specific information relevant to a particular infant's development. Appropriate home experiences were suggested to encourage greater father-infant involvement between sessions.

The resource book contained detailed materials about infant development from birth to 24 months of age, focusing on motor, perceptual, language, and cognitive development. Also included were specific activities for infants of different ages with an accompanying rationale. A variety of additional resource materials were provided including lists of relevant publications and addresses of various agencies.

The Participants

Seven fathers responded to the brochure mailed to all fathers in the local area with infants born between August and December, 1979. The names were obtained from the birth announcements in local newspapers. An eighth father, whose child did not meet the age limitations, was admitted because of special needs, i.e., the infant (age 12 months) was blind and somewhat developmentally delayed. Five of the fathers were first-time fathers; the remaining participants were fathers of two or three other children.

The fathers enrolled in the Father-Infant Program for a variety of reasons: (a) their spouses had registered them (although they later approved of the idea); (b) concern for their wives who experiences stress adjusting to full-time motherhood and desire to gain skills to relieve her of some infant care responsibilities; (c) desire to commit special time to this child, so as to know him/her more intimately; and (d) desire to learn as much as possible about child care (one participant was soon to become a single-parent, custodial father). Most importantly, all of the participants expressed the desire to become a more dominant, nurturant, and involved figure in the lives of their children, unlike their own fathers who were reported as somewhat aloof and uninvolved when the participants were young.

The Facilitators

Five facilitators provided an interdisciplinary perspective and a variety of strengths to the Father-Infant Program. Four facilitators were faculty at Washington State University (two from the Department of Child and Family Studies and two from the Psychology Department) and one was the director of Common Ministry. All but one facilitator were male, as it was believed that the participants should be provided with competent male models. Only three facilitators participated in any given Saturday session to avoid overwhelming the fathers.

The Weekly Sessions

Six Saturday sessions were scheduled from 9:00 to 11:30 A.M. and consisted of five phases: check-in, sharing time, empathy training, songs and exercises and presentation of a special topic.

Arrival and Check-In

Fathers and infants were greeted by facilitators as they arrived. Extra clothing was removed, necessities (e.g., bottles, diapers) were placed near the discussion area, and refreshments were obtained prior to the start of the initial discussion. Facilitators encouraged socializing between fathers to increase their feelings of comfort and belonging.

The principal facilitator for a particular session began the discussion by asking each individual father to share what had happened with his infant during the previous week. They were encouraged to describe observed changes, new behaviors and accomplishments, and any problems experienced with the baby. This phase was intended to allow fathers to relax and feel comfortable, and to encourage them to gain greater skill in observing their babies between sessions.

Sharing Time

At this time, the fathers were encouraged to discuss problems or stresses experienced in the various components of the program or the individual sessions. Also, fathers shared information about the way in which participation in the program had affected their relationship with spouses and friends; e.g., some fathers commented that their wives' bragging about the participation to friends had resulted in some problems with their friends.

A major purpose of this phase was to facilitate the development of a peer support group. This open environment was important because of the lack of encouragement in today's society for fathers to be involved with their infants. Facilitators encouraged this in a variety of ways, such as raising issues and questions for group reaction, so that the fathers were exposed to similarities and differences of opinions on infant development and fathering.

Empathy Training

During this phase, a variety of touching, attending, and experiential exercises were used to encourage fathers to better understand what it might feel like to be an infant. Following each experience, the facilitators focused discussion on the infant's perspective as limited by their physical abilities or the way in which the infant perceived the world. These experiences attempted to assist fathers in adjusting their expectations and communication styles so as to more effectively relate to the baby.

Songs and Exercises

Using guided participation, the fathers learned songs while practicing a variety of physical exercises modeled by the facilitators with dolls. Examples of the exercises included arm crossing, leg raising, bending, crossing, bicycling, and torso supporting. Facilitators emphasized the value of the individual exercises and ways in which the experience could be generalized to the home.

The purpose of this phase was to teach fathers specific activities in which they could engage in with their babies to increase the amount of contact between them. The songs and exercises also assisted fathers in gaining confidence in their ability to relate to their infants in a meaningful way.

Special Topic Presentations

A 20-30 minute presentation on topics related to parenting and child development was included in each session. The topics were selected from a list prioritized by the fathers prior to the first session. Professionals from the community and University offered information on health care, nutrition, language development, how infants learn to perceive their world, family communication, and baby massage. Although no special presentation focused on emotional development, issues and concerns related to this topic were raised spontaneously in almost every session. During and after each presentation, fathers were encouraged to ask questions and share their personal experiences related to the content of the presentation.

Flexible Time Schedule

Each of the six Saturday sessions followed a somewhat flexible time schedule, with some experimentation of time and placement of the phases occurring throughout the six weeks. The time schedule was as follows:

9:00 - 9:15	Arrival
9:15 - 9:35	Check-In
9:35 - 9:50	Sharing Time
9:50 - 10:00	Empathy Training
10:00 - 10:15	Songs and Exercises
10:15 - 10:30	Refreshment and Infant Feeding
10:30 - 11:00	Special Topic Presentation
11:00 - 11:15	Questions and Discussion
11:15 - 11:30	Departure

Program Evaluation

The program was evaluated through both formal and informal methods. The formal evaluation was based on a questionnaire administered before and after the program, and an additional evaluation form designed to provide specific feedback on the program itself. Informal weekly evaluations by the fathers occurred during the "sharing time" in each session. Facilitators solicited feedback from the fathers on the way in which the program met or failed to meet their needs and also on the timing, content, and overall delivery of the various aspects of each session. The facilitators also met weekly to discuss and evaluate the sessions in order to discuss observed weaknesses and to implement immediate changes to better meet the needs of the participants.

Part of the formal evaluation was based on a pre-post assessment of: (a) attitude toward fathering, using a scale developed by Bigner (1977) which distinguishes "traditional" and "developmental" attitude: (b) estimate of reported time available during the week; (c) estimate of reported time spent with infant during the week; and (d) degree of participation in infant care activities, as measured by an adapted form of the Father-Child Activity Scale (Bigner, 1977; Quehrn, 1980). Participants received these questionnaires with their initial contact letter and returned the completed materials at the first of the six sessions. The post-test was mailed to the fathers with the last letter following the fifth session and was returned at the last session. In addition to the pre-post assessment, a general program evaluation form was developed and included with the post-test questionnaire to provide additional feedback on the quality and usefulness of the resource book, weekly letters, special topic presentations, meeting of program goals, degree of satisfaction with various components of each Saturday session, evaluation of individual facilitators, and recommendations for program changes.

Although a pre-post assessment with such a small sample can provide limited information on the effectiveness of the program, the statistical analysis indicated no significant difference in attitude toward fathering, father-child activity, and time available to infants over the six-week program. More importantly, however, fathers did differ significantly ($p < .001$) in the amount of time they reported spending with their infants; that is, there was a significant increase in time spent with infant over the six weeks. The program evaluation form supported this finding in that fathers noted that the "songs and exercises" were particularly helpful because now they had something they could do with their infant that also would enhance his/her development.

The program evaluation form was also part of the formal evaluation, and it provided additional valuable information. For example, it was evident that the fathers particularly appreciated the discussion and sharing elements of each session and indicated that greater emphasis should be placed on this phase in future programs. Similarly, fathers expressed a desire for greater emphasis on specific activities and decreased emphasis on empathy training. Overall, the fathers saw the program as meeting the stated goals and as providing them with useful

information and a more positive, relaxed attitude toward their role as fathers. They also indicated a strong desire to meet again several weeks after the session to view slides and a videotape taken during the program, and more importantly, to see how the infants had changed and grown. At this reunion many of the fathers and their spouses commented that they wished they could continue in the program.

The informal evaluation consisted of the weekly feedback from the fathers and the weekly evaluations by the facilitators. Overall, the informal feedback from the fathers was very positive; they appreciated, thoroughly enjoyed, and eagerly learned from the information and experiences offered. All comments by fathers consistently emphasized the value of the program in facilitating their willingness and comfort in interacting with their infants and in assisting in his/her daily care. They also highly valued their new ability to observe the infant's development from week to week, and looked forward to sharing the observed changes with the other fathers during the subsequent session.

The informal evaluation by the facilitators noted the following changes in the father and/or the father-infant relationship over the six sessions: (1) fathers held and touched infants more; (b) fathers developed a more relaxed style of interaction and appeared to enjoy more the time spent together; (c) fathers became more observant of the changes (both physical and behavioral) in their infants; (d) fathers discussed the infants in more positive terms, as if the infants had become more competent; and (e) fathers became more willing to share ideas and listen to their peers' ideas.

Discussion and Conclusions

The combined formal and informal evaluations indicated that the quality of the father-infant interaction was enhanced; the fathers were spending more time with their infants, they had specific activities to share with them, their expressed ease in interaction with their infants increased, they appeared to be more empathetic and positive toward their infants, and they were more observant of growth and changes in their infants.

As a result of the experience provided through the Father-Infant Program and the feedback received, the facilitators were encouraged and decided to continue the program. They are convinced that the program, as it is currently designed, offers a model that can be easily generalized to other areas, using the resources available to those particular communities.

It is their belief that as more family units become dual-employed or dual-career, there will be an increased need for males to assume greater responsibility in both household and childcare tasks. If the majority of mothers desired more active participation in childcare by fathers and were supportive of such behavior (as the participants' wives were), programs such as this could do much to encourage greater participation in parenting. This program provided fathers with meaningful activities to share with their infants which appeared to result in a

greater sense of competence. The positive effects of increased competency on the family unit was expressed by several fathers who noted that they now had something that "the three of us can share."

Programs which encourage greater involvement of fathers in child development may, as this one appeared to do, increase men's sensitivity to the realities of caring for the very young child over extended periods of time. Such increased sensitivity might result in more empathy, understanding, and supportive behavior between spouses. As noted earlier, some current research already suggests that shared parenting can enhance family relationships.

Finally, as fathers become more willing to participate in the care of the very young child and gain a greater sense of competence in this role, parenting will no longer be synonymous with "mothering"--instead, parenting will be a shared activity for mothers and fathers from which children and the family unit can benefit.

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Footnotes

1. All are at Washington State University, Pullman, Washington 99164. Contributions to the program were also made by Jim Nielson of the Common Ministry, Pullman, and Robert Johnson of the Psychology Department, Washington State University.

2. The Common Ministry at Washington State University is an interdominational program which sponsors a variety of services and educational programs for the community.

INTERACTION OF SELF-CONCEPT, TELEVISION, AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES IN FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

by

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Family recreational and leisure activities make an important contribution to the development of young children. Through these activities, children develop perceptual and motor skills, verbal concepts, and components of self-concept. Many parents, unaware of developmental processes, tend to view leisure as less worthy than work and thus do not attend to the structure and content of their child's leisure patterns. The need for parents to attend to leisure as it pertains to the developing child, however, is becoming recognized. The works of Hoban (1964) and Marzollo and Lloyd (1972), for example, focus on leisure activities as entertainment for young children while at the same time providing guidance for parents in understanding the complexity of these activities.

Young children acquire a perception of their abilities from their activities. This perception helps constitute the self-concept of the child. Many activities and experiences of young children have been investigated in attempts to identify the relationships of the child's activities to self-concept (Mundgren, 1975).

A primary leisure activity of young children involves television viewing. There have been many investigations concerning the effects of television content on children's behavior and patterns of learning (Friedrich & Stein, 1973; Hetherington, 1975; Liebert, Neale & Davidson, 1973; Robinson, 1969; Winn, 1977). Results of such studies have shown the effects of television on a variety of behaviors, such as aggression towards others, prosocial behaviors, fear reduction, and acceptance of people of other cultures. Both positive and negative effects of television have been demonstrated as a function of program content. Another factor involved in the use of television as a leisure activity, however, focuses on the concern over the process of television viewing. Concern has been voiced regarding the displacement of other activities because of excess viewing time (Schramm, Lyle & Parker, 1961), the lack of contact with real people (Bettelheim, 1960), the confusion of real and fantasy worlds (Noble, 1975), and a concern for altered family patterns. Bronfenbrenner (1973) suggests that television viewing interferes with family interaction by focusing attention on the screen rather than other people.

The purpose of this study was to examine whether self-concept is related to leisure activities of young children and parental involvement in those activities. It was anticipated that parental involvement in the leisure activities of children, including television viewing, would be associated with higher levels of self-concept in children.

Method

Subjects. The sample was composed of 55 three, four, and five year old children who were involved in a community Park and Recreation preschool program and their parents. The average age of the children was four and one-half years with a range of three to five and one-half years. The sample was composed of 25 boys and 30 girls and constituted 55% of the children enrolled in the program. For this study only families consisting of two parents with one or more children and at least one parent employed were included. From the parent interviews it was determined that parents of the children were employed in traditionally middle-class occupations and most had at least a high school education.

Instruments. A parent interview (adapted from Friedrich & Stein, 1975) was used to obtain demographic data for sample identification. In addition, information concerning family routines and daily activities of the child was also obtained. Parents were also asked to record their child's activities over a one week period. A schedule chart for recording the child's daily activities was developed for the study. The parent recorded what the child did each day for seven day in half-hour intervals.

Two methods of self-concept assessment were used in this study. The first measure was the Make-A-Boy (Girl) portion of the Riley Preschool Developmental Screening Inventory (Riley, 1969). Each child is asked to draw a self-portrait and the drawing is scored via protocols developed by Riley. As a validity check on the Riley scale, a teacher assessment scale was also developed. On this scale, teachers rated students on six descriptive phrases related to self-concept. Analysis showed that these two scales were significantly correlated, $r = .26$, $p < .04$, providing some support for the validity of the Riley with this sample.

Procedure. Both the child and at least one parent (most often the mother) met the researcher in a room at the recreation center where the child attended the program for the interview and self-concept evaluation. The child was directed to a small table near the adults where toys and drawing supplies were available. All interviews were conducted by a female examiner. When the parent interview was completed, the parent was provided with instructions regarding the time schedule chart. The parent then left the room while the examiner proceeded to administer the Riley scale to the child. Upon completion of the self-concept scale, the parent returned to the room and any

questions about the daily activities chart were answered. Parents were requested to return the chart in seven days. Six families did not complete the chart, or failed to return it, and were consequently excluded from the study leaving a sample of 55 families.

Random telephone calls were made during the project to encourage time charting and to check for accuracy of recording. All families contacted reported to be completing the charts correctly.

Results and Discussion

Data were analyzed via analysis of variance and Pearson product-moment correlations. Analysis revealed significant differences in the pattern of leisure activities of the children, $F(3,156) = 36.81$, $p < .0001$, with playmate activities ranking as the predominant activity (34.7%) followed by family activity (26.3%), solitary activity (13.5%) and one-to-one parent/child activity (9.5%). A distinct pattern was also found in television viewing activities of the children, $F(3.156) = 44.26$, $p < .0001$. Children spent most of their viewing time with other children (54.8%), a considerable amount of time was spent in solitary viewing (27.5%), a smaller percentage of time in family viewing (13.7%) and very little time was spent in parent/child viewing (4.0%).

The relatively low amount of parent/child interaction time is cause for concern because parent/child activities appear to be important in building and maintaining positive self-concepts. Self-concept was found to be significantly related to parent/child leisure interaction, $r = .28$, $p < .03$. These children, however, spent the lowest percentage of their time in this type of interaction.

When self-concept scores for males were considered, Riley scores were found to be negatively related to percentage of leisure time spent viewing television, $r = -.42$, $p < .04$, and somewhat related to hours of television viewing, $r = -.34$, $p < .08$. The Riley scale also indicated a significant relationship between self-concept scores and parent/child television viewing experiences for males, $r = .49$, $p < .01$, and a nearly significant relationship for females, $r = .35$, $p < .06$. This latter finding is important in the consideration of family interaction patterns. Perhaps the amount of television viewed is not as crucial as is the viewing environment. For most children, however, the vast majority of hours spent watching television are without the presence of an adult. Furthermore, it should be noted that a significant relationship was found between hours of television viewed and the amount of leisure time spent alone, $r = .40$, $p < .002$. Thus the possibility exists that children who watched more television tended to have fewer interactions with other people.

Our research indicated that relationships do exist between leisure activities (such as television), parents' involvement in those activities and young children's self-concepts. Whether self-concept influences how television is viewed or whether television viewing influences self-concept is unknown. The findings do suggest that as the amount of television viewing increases, so does leisure time spent in solitary activities. For males, it appears that the amount of television viewing has a negative relationship to self-concept. Although the pricise cause/effect relationship cannot be determined from this study, we are concerned that the findings might suggest that excessive television viewing leads to less interaction with others and thus lower self-concepts in these young children. Parents may need to evaluate the amount of television their children watch in order to accurately estimate television's influence upon their children's activities. If television viewing limits children's social experiences, parents and other adults involved with the socialization of children need to be aware of possible problems related to social development.

The data also suggest that parental involvement in both general leisure activities and television viewing is related to self-concept. The optimum teaching environment may be the one-to-one parent/child interaction. Yet this type of interaction is the least frequent in the child's world. Many children may not be receiving the necessary familial interaction to enhance self-concept.

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PREPARING PARENTS TO BE SEX EDUCATORS

by

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An increasing number of studies suggest that parents view sex education as one important aspect of their parental role (Good Housekeeping, 1969; Roberts, Kline & Gagnon, 1978). One recent national survey found that eight out of ten parents wish to have the primary responsibility for educating their children about sexuality (General Mills, 1977). Yet parents are rarely reported to be an important source of sexual information by their children (Gordon, Scales & Everly, 1979; Libby, Acock & Payne, 1974; Sorensen, 1972, 1973). Research indicates that parents engage in very little sex-related communication with their teenagers and are even less likely to discuss sexuality with their younger children (Elias, 1978; Roberts et al., 1978).

There are several possible explanations for parents' failure to follow through with the task of sex education. Many parents believe that they lack sufficient knowledge about specific sexual topics and are therefore reluctant to discuss them with their children (Kirkendall, 1950; U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, 1970). Other parents report strong feelings of discomfort when they encounter children's sexual curiosity (General Mills, 1977; Gordon et al., 1979). Both of these problems may stem, in part, from parents' failure to receive adequate sex education in their own families. In one recent study of parents with preschool children, only 12 percent of the respondents reported satisfaction with their parents' attempts to educate them about sexual issues (Aragon & Koblinsky, 1980).

If inadequate knowledge and communication skills are responsible for the lack of involvement in children's sex education, then efforts can be made to increase parents' skills as sex educators. Parent education programs may help parents to become more comfortable with the topic of human sexuality and may provide them with alternative strategies for responding to children's sexual curiosity. Recent studies provide evidence of parents' interest in achieving greater competency in this parenting task. In one national survey of parent education needs, approximately one-third of parents with three to eleven year old children reported that they would be very interested in attending a class on children's sex education (General Mills, 1977). Similarly, a study of San Diego parents with preschool children revealed that 56 percent of the participants expressed a desire to attend a parent workshop on this topic (Aragon & Koblinsky, 1980).

Sex Education in Early Childhood

Numerous educators have stressed the need to begin children's sex education in the early childhood years (Gagnon, 1965; Gordon, 1975). Although the topic of sex education is often associated with adolescence, research suggests that early childhood is an important period in children's formation of sexual attitudes (Gagnon, 1965; Woody, 1973). A tremendous amount of sexual learning and curiosity occurs between the ages of two and nine. Children discover genital differences between the sexes, question their parents about reproduction and birth, become aware of menstruation, engage in masturbation and sex play, and experiment with sexual or "obscene" language. Several studies have found that young children bring up a greater number of sexually-oriented questions and situations in the home than do their adolescent siblings (Gilbert & Bailis, 1980; Hattendorf, 1932; Strain, 1948).

The literature on early childhood sexuality stresses several reasons for assuming a serious approach to young children's sex education. Sex education, in its broadest sense, involves the development of attitudes, values, and feelings about being a male or female. The earliest sexual learning will occur in the home as parents lay the foundation for children's gender identity, sex role attitudes, and moral beliefs. Parents have a greater opportunity to influence children's personalities in the early childhood years than they will in any subsequent age period. Moreover, their willingness to address the simpler, factually-oriented questions of preschoolers may provide valuable practice for answering the more difficult value-laden questions raised by adolescents. It is believed that parents who initiate a dialogue about sexuality when children are young will increase the likelihood that their children will come to them for information and advice as they grow older. Conversely, those parents who ignore children's sexual questions, or postpone discussion of sensitive topics, may lose the opportunity to share sexual information and values with their offspring.

Sex Education Workshop for Parents of Young Children

The Early Childhood Sex Education Project at San Diego State University grew from the desire to assist parents of young children in becoming more skillful sex educators. The project was designed to investigate parental sex education practices and to develop workshops for parents with children under the age of ten. The major goals of the workshop are: (1) to increase parents' level of comfort in responding to sexual questions and behaviors, (2) to develop parents' skills in communicating sexual information and values, and (3) to provide parents with knowledge about a variety of sexual topics. Workshops have been presented to a large number of parents whose children attend federally-funded day care centers, private preschools, and early childhood programs associated with high schools and colleges.

The first objective of each parent workshop is to help parents feel more comfortable with the topic of sex education. Parents are encouraged to share both successful and unsuccessful experiences in answering children's sexual questions or dealing with sexually-oriented behaviors. The realization that other parents have confronted embarrassing situations or have experienced feelings of inadequacy may relax apprehensive members of the group. Workshop leaders emphasize that parents do not have to feel completely comfortable or have extensive knowledge of sexuality in order to begin participating in the task of sex education. A willingness to entertain a child's every question and to dig up information about unfamiliar topics are the most important qualities of a parent educator. Workshop leaders may also introduce values clarification exercises or other attitude-sharing activities in order to assist parents in developing communication skills.

The informational content of the parent workshop is based on research examining the sexually-oriented questions and situations commonly raised by young children (Gilbert & Bailis, 1980). Topics discussed on a regular basis include: genital differences between the sexes, nudity/modesty behavior, reproduction, birth, menstruation, masturbation, sex play, sexual language, and child molestation. As the workshop leader introduces each topic, parents are urged to share their feelings and experiences. A discussion is then focused on the alternative ways in which parents might respond to each situation (Koblinsky, Atkinson & Davis, 1980). Role-playing exercises are often used to provide parents with practice in communicating information about the more sensitive subjects. Parents also have the opportunity to raise questions about additional areas of concern. Among the topics which have been explored in several previous workshops are homosexuality, premarital sexual behavior, and effects of divorce on children's sexuality.

Workshops sponsored by the Early Childhood Sex Education Project have been free to all interested parents and have accommodated groups ranging from ten to over fifty. An advance flyer announcing the opportunity to learn "How to Talk to Your Child About Sex" has been very effective in stimulating parent interest. The majority of parent workshops have been presented in one three-hour session or two meetings of approximately two hours. While this period is insufficient for extensive development of sexual knowledge and communication skills, educators must be aware of the constraints on parents' free time. An informal survey of San Diego parents with young children revealed very little interest in attending a sex education series of four weekly meetings. Consequently, workshops were carefully organized to address parents' major concerns within a shorter time period. To encourage further development of parents' sex education skills, workshop participants are provided with printed information on sex education resource materials and educational services of local family planning agencies.

Increasing Fathers' Involvement in Sex Education

Parent educators may have to make special efforts to increase paternal involvement in the task of sex education. The current literature reveals that fathers have traditionally played a minimal role in educating their children about sexuality (e.g., Elias, 1978; Lewis, 1973; Payne, 1970). Fathers of daughters, in particular have been reluctant to communicate about sexual issues (Roberts et al., 1978). Because both parents have an important influence on children's emerging sexual attitudes, educators must actively recruit fathers for their sex education workshops. To maximize the likelihood of fathers' participation, program planners should utilize some male workshop leaders, address topics of special concern to fathers, and schedule meetings for convenient nonworking hours. The provision of free child care greatly increases the probability that both mothers and fathers will attend.

There are several advantages in having both parents participate in the parent education workshops. The sessions provide a stimulus for parents to clarify each partner's sexual values and an opportunity to develop mutual strategies for responding to children's sexual curiosity. Parents may create considerable confusion in their children if one provides accurate information about reproduction and birth, while the other explains that babies grow in the cabbage patch. All workshops should emphasize the important influence of the parents' marriage relationship on children's developing sexual attitudes. Parents who demonstrate warmth, affection, and support for one another are providing their children with positive models for heterosexual behavior.

Addressing the Needs of Parents from Different Backgrounds

Those who direct parent education workshops know that the beliefs and values of parents will vary according to their ethnic, religious, and social class backgrounds. Therefore, leaders of sex education groups must carefully consider the attitudes, socialization experiences, and informational needs of the groups they address. The leader's role is not to impose his own beliefs on others, but to suggest alternative responses to sexually-oriented situations. Respect for the moral values of workshop participants is critical in building a relaxed and accepting attitude toward sexuality.

The original workshops developed by the Early Childhood Project were geared to middle-class, predominantly Anglo-American parents. However, the content has been revised to address the needs of individuals from several different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. One group to whom we have attempted to extend the sex education workshop is the Mexican-American parents. A study comparing the sex education practices of Mexican-American parents with those of Anglo parents from the same social classes was especially valuable in developing a culturally relevant program for those of hispanic heritage (Aragon & Koblinsky, 1980).

Parents who participated in the latter study were questioned about their plans for discussing 15 sexual topics with their children. In comparison to the Anglo parents, Mexican-American parents felt significantly less comfortable about discussing the majority of topics and planned to introduce most topics at significantly later ages. For example, Anglo mothers expected to present children with information about genital sex differences and birth between the ages of three and five, while Mexican-American mothers did not expect to introduce these topics until their children were between the ages of six and eight.

The differential responses of parents from the two cultural groups were thought to result, in part, from the Mexican-Americans' Catholic upbringing and their lesser exposure to sex education in their own families. Over half of the Anglo parents received some sexual information from their parents, while less than a quarter of the Mexican-American participants reported their parents to be a source of sexual information. Yet these factors did not reduce the Mexican-American parent's interest in increasing their skills as sex educators. Indeed, 62 percent of the Mexican-American mothers, as compared to 48 percent of the Anglo mothers, stated that they would definitely attend a parent workshop on sex education. The latter finding came as somewhat of a surprise, because most directors of preschool programs serving Mexican-American families believed that the topic of sex education would be too "threatening" or "offensive" for a parent meeting.

An awareness of the sex-education views of Mexican-American parents was extremely useful in planning a workshop for this group. Because mothers expected to postpone discussion of most sexual topics until the preadolescent or adolescent years, leaders encouraged mothers to share examples of their young children's sexual curiosity. Discussion then addressed the potential benefits of establishing a family dialogue on sexual issues when children were young. To reduce maternal feelings of discomfort in responding to sensitive topics (e.g., questions about reproduction and intercourse), workshop leaders role-played situations involving an exchange of information between a mother and child. These exercises were especially effective in generating conversation about alternative ways of responding to children's sexual questions. The presence of a bilingual Mexican-American workshop leader also helped to maintain a comfortable atmosphere and to bring out parents' specific concerns.

Still another target group of the project is the adolescent parent. Research indicates that many adolescent parents exhibit inadequate parenting skills (e.g., deLissovoy, 1973) and report low levels of communication about sexual issues in their own families (Presser, 1974). Several sex education workshops have been provided for mothers and fathers in high school programs for teen mothers and adolescent parents. The majority of participants were single Black mothers living at home with children under the age of six. A pilot

study comparing parents who participated in the workshop with a comparable control group indicated that workshop participants showed greater gains in sexual knowledge, comfort level, and communication skills. High school teachers also reported that the workshop stimulated several adolescents to seek accurate information about adult sexual topics.

Evaluation of Workshops

Continued improvement of the content and relevancy of the sex education workshop for parents from several different backgrounds cannot be achieved without an evaluation component. Therefore, it is important to seek feedback from parents about the effectiveness of various exercises and activities. Evaluation questionnaires should be anonymous and should be completed before the parents leave the workshop. The more brief questionnaires may include only a few questions such as, "What was the most/least useful aspect of this meeting?" "What topic(s) should be discussed more thoroughly?" and "Were you comfortable with the workshop leader?" More extensive evaluation measures might assess changes in parents' knowledge, comfort, and communication skills in the various areas covered by the workshop. Parental responses not only provide useful criticisms, but also reinforce workshop leaders who have successfully achieved program objectives.

Summary

Sex education is an important but often neglected topic in parent education programs. Parents play a major role in the development of healthy sexual attitudes in their children. Those parents who learn to be open, knowledgeable, and comfortable about sexuality when their children are young may increase the likelihood that their children will consult them for sexual information and advice in the future. Conversely, those who ignore children's sexual curiosity or postpone discussion of sexual issues may encourage children to seek information from others and thus forgo opportunities to pass on their sexual values.

Numerous studies have illustrated the rewards of parental involvement in children's sex education. Children who confide in their parents or rely on parents as their major source of sexual information report lower levels of premarital intercourse, less promiscuous behavior, more knowledge about contraception, more effective use of contraception, and less use of pornography than children who have obtained their sexual information elsewhere (Hansson, Jones & Chernovetz, 1979; Kantner & Zelnik, 1972, 1973; Lewis, 1973; Spanier, 1977; U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, 1970). In view of this evidence, parent educators are urged to develop and support programs which will assist parents in becoming more skillful sex educators.

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PARENT-CHILD SEX TALKS: A DEMONSTRATION

by

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with

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His Daughter

Though most young people say that they would prefer to get their sex information from their parents (Gagnon, 1965), few, in fact, are actually afforded that opportunity. Hunt (1974) noted that both parents together were the main sources of sexual information for only a scant 9% of males and 17% of females. Kinsey (1953) reported that a mere 5% of his female subjects received anything more than incidental information from their parents. Many parents simply issue orders, rather than discussing their children's sexual questions (Libby and Nass, 1971). Fathers, especially, seldom communicate with their children about sex. This is particularly true of fathers and daughters. Only 1 of 100 women remember their father as the main source of their sexual information (Hunt, 1974).

The present article represents an actual example of a parent-child discussion about sex. More importantly, it is a father-daughter sex talk edited from an actual recorded conversation.

On the night before this conversation was taped, the author and his 13-year-old daughter, Beth, chatted endlessly about many things, including sex. Upon reflecting, the author saw value in his daughter's comments and the insight they provide into the developing sexual awareness of a young adolescent female. When he asked his daughter the next morning if she would mind if they recorded a few summary comments about their previous night's discussion, she readily agreed. No preliminary notes or questions were written down. The microphone was simply placed on the table, the recorder activated, and a 20-minute audio-tape made. The results are reported below, with the father's words identified by "F"; the daughter's by "D" and conversational emphases italicized for effect.

Dialogue

F You say that some of the kids come to you because they can't talk with their parents about sex, and they consider you kind of an expert on these things. Can you tell me about that? What suggestions do you have from those experiences?

D Well, kids will often come to me asking what certain words mean; and maybe I'm not sure, and they'll go and look it up in a dictionary. I think it would help if, when the parent tells the child about sex, they would make a small dictionary of words often used.

F What kinds of words are you thinking about?

D Well, just the different words, the different terms, like....

F You told me about a word at a slumber party, where....Can you tell me about that again?

D Well, it's "pooberty," or "pewberty"....

F Puberty.

D ... And we were sort of wondering exactly what it meant! It's just different words like this that may be used in a conversation, and the kids don't know just exactly what they mean. Then they misunderstand them, and sometimes this scares them..

F Mmm-hmm. And what did you girls do?

D We dragged a big, huge dictionaty down from the girl's attic, or upstairs. It took two girls to carry it, and we never did find the word! And we were all just sort of guessing about what it meant.

F And then afterwards you had difficulty even remembering the word!

D Mmm-hmm!

F You thought it had an "e" and a "ph" in it. It just happened that your daddy mentioned the right word to you and you said, "That's it'." Do you have any other suggestions for parents about talking with kids about sex?

D Well, often...when parents talk about sex with their children, they act like it's something secret, and they're trying to keep it from everybody else, like it's just something you shouldn't talk about when other people are around! And I think you should just talk about it normally, because it's something that's around you all the time; and it's no big secret, because you're going to find out sooner or later, anyway. And parents just talk...they're too excited and just nervous when they talk about it. They should just relax and talk about it like they'd talk about anything.

F When should parents start talking with their children about sex?

D Well, I think after 10, if the children ask questions, the questions should be answered; and after 12, if they still haven't asked any questions, they should be told anyway.

F Well, how can parents bring this up with their child? You say a lot of them are nervous and scared. What would you think would be a very natural way for them to tell about it?

D Well. . .

F ...So that they wouldn't feel so scared, I mean....

D Well, there are many little "beginner's packs," they call them--those little books.

F For girls, you mean?

D Yes, for girls. I'm not sure whether they've got books for boys or not. I wouldn't know. But, for the girls, I know that my mother bought a special pack that had a book in it, and she just sat down and showed me the book, and we read through it together, and just started talking about it. Mom explained the whole thing! And it wasn't scary or frightening to me after a while. At first I was overwhelmed, because it was hard to understand; and I wasn't sure what I knew and what I didn't know yet. And was there more?

F Did you feel that Mommy had told you everything that you wanted to know?

D For right then, I did; and then later I had some more questions.

F How did you feel when you had some more questions, and Mommy hadn't told you the answers to these? What did you think?

D Well, I thought maybe she thought that unless I really asked the questions, I wasn't ready to learn them, and so...uh...

F Had you even thought of the questions before?

D Well,...

F In relation to other children, I mean, like other girls?

D Well, sometimes, but not very often. Maybe I'd think of it, and then later when Mom and I were talking, it wouldn't come out. I just wouldn't think of it right then, but later I'd ask Mom and she would explain it to me just very naturally.

F And you didn't think she seemed scared, or nervous, or anything?

D Oh, no! She was really relaxed! And it's something girls ought to know....

F Well, how do you view this matter of sex? You talked some of the kids feeling that, oh, it was a really "dirty" thing, you know, and something they ought to talk about in secret and on the sly. How do you feel about this?

D Well, I don't think sex is anything "dirty" at all! Because it's around us, and everyone is either a boy or a girl, and you can tell that right away just from their appearance. And it shouldn't be anything considered dirty at all, unless it's made dirty! And it can be made dirty. But just regular, true facts--that's nothing dirty! And it shouldn't be kept secret! Oh, it shouldn't be just blabbed all over the place and just yelled all over; but it shouldn't be anything that girls are scared to talk about, or feel that maybe they can't talk about with anyone. But some of the girls feel that maybe their mothers might think that they're dirty, or "nasty" as they say, if they go and ask them some of the questions. Now, I don't think that parents feel this way at all! Some of them might not quite understand how to tell children, but I think that the kids should feel free to ask questions, no matter what, because they're going to have to know! And I don't think it should be considered a "dirty" subject at all!

F But a lot of kids can't talk to their parents because they can't talk to them about other things, maybe.

D Mmm-hmm. Yes! And, well, some of them just can't talk to them because they're afraid of this certain subject. For some reason, this certain subject always scares kids.

F They've heard stories?

D Mmm-hmm....

F Do the kids tell stories at school? Do the girls tell "dirty" stories to one another? .... How does that work at school now?

D Well, I don't know about the boys, but the girls, I know, when they get further up into high school...then during noon hour, they all stand around and just sort of "whisper" all kinds of little things to each other....And for a junior high girl who may not know everything yet, some of these stories can be really misleading, and can scare them just to death! Because they won't understand it...and then the girls, the junior high girls, may be giving explanations why a certain thing happens, when they don't really know! They're just sort of making up a myth! I think the girls shouldn't always believe what they hear in girls' restrooms at noon hour, because half of it, I know, over half of it, is not true! I'm glad my mother told me everything before I got....

F Do you think a lot of the kids don't really know what they're talking about?

D Right! Right! The parents need to sit down and talk to them outwardly and freely about it. And they should tell them everything that a child asks about! And maybe if there's something else related to this subject that he asks about....they should go on and explain further, if there's something else he thinks she ought to know.

F How would you feel if you were asking some questions and your mother or dad said, "Well, this is something that we should talk about at another time, because you're not old enough for that right now?"

D Well, I might feel sort of curious about what this thing would be, and wonder why I would have to be any older.... I know, when I was 10 or so, I could understand why maybe just a little bit older might not hurt. But now, I think that maybe I would feel like they didn't trust me, quite, because when you want to know something, and the other girls have been talking about it, or asking questions about it or something, and you don't know, you feel sort of in the dark! And you just wonder what it's all about! I don't feel I can go and ask other girls questions, because they don't always know, themselves. They'll give you the wrong answer! And I'll bring it up with Mom, maybe, when she and I talk, and she'll wonder where on earth I got that idea! Then it makes me feel like maybe I'm too young to discuss sex, or something. But I don't feel this much anymore; but when I'd first found out, then I did.

F You had some questions about menstruation, and...did you wonder about boys?

D Mmm-hmm! I wondered if, maybe.... I knew girls had a monthly period, but I didn't know what the outward physical signs were that a boy was now a man.

F Do you understand some of these now?

D I think I do a little better than I had, because of our talk last night. But, just talking along, it's hard to really understand it fully. I understand it; but I couldn't explain it to someone else.

F So you think we have to talk some more, and that as you have questions, we'll probably talk about them?

D Mmm-hmm...Yes! I used to be scared to death even to think of talking to you, because you're a man,.... But now I feel more like, "Well, it's there; why not talk about it?" Because, really, like I said, everybody's either a boy or a girl, and they're going to find out sooner or later, anyway!

....when I found out about the way that babies come to be, it scared me at first! But, after Mom had explained it thoroughly, then I wasn't scared about it anymore. When I first asked Mom about this, she said that my father and her had done it, and that every time they had a kid, they had to do it, and I thought, "You mean you've done it four times...already?" And I just about flipped! Because it scared me to even think about doing it once...because, well, girls and boys don't even talk about things like that now! And doing it more than once, well, I just didn't know whether I could live through it! But now it seems rather natural to me!

I think maybe it has something to do with my growing up. I can accept more things like this because I'm more mature mentally. And I think I just have a more thorough understanding. . . .

F It kind of shocked you to think that your Mom and Dad would do such a thing?

D Yeah! Well, at first, I thought maybe they were just being "dirty," because I didn't realize that other people did this....And when I found out that everyone did it, it just shocked me! I was amazed and bewildered about it, and the main thing I was, was scared! I was just absolutely frightened out of my wits, because I didn't thoroughly understand it! But I think that now I understand it a lot better, so it doesn't scare me anymore, by any means.

F And this is something that a man and woman who love each other very much do to express their love....

D Mom explained to me why they did it, why they wanted to do it as, at first, when a boy and girl like each other, they may walk with each other, and pretty soon they're holding hands, and then maybe it's putting an arm around each other, and then it's kissing, because they want to be close together. And she said that this was the ultimate: this was as close as you could get. This helped me to understand it a lot better than what I had understood it, because I wondered why they would want to do this.

It just didn't seem natural! And I knew that women don't just go around talking about sex with anyone....You just sort of talked about it quietly and not nervously or anything. But, well, it's just that now that I understand it better, it doesn't seem so unnatural. And I understand why someone would want to do this, and not just, just do it! ....Animals do it just for the sake of reproducing, but humans do it because they love each other. Now that I understand this, it all makes sense to me. And just about every talk we have, whether it's you and me, or Mom and me, then I

understand it just a little bit more, and it seems just a little bit more natural. It doesn't scare me quite as much, and I'm not frightened about it anymore at all, because I understand it better.

F Well, I' m going to have to run along,...but I've enjoyed our little talk here. And I know you're going to have other questions! Do you think we can get together and talk about them sometime?

D Oh, I think so!

F Just about any time would be all right?

D Mmm-hmm!

Discussion

Several emphases relevant to parents, teachers, sex educators, and youth workers are highlighted by this young adolescent's comments.

1. Sexual information can be anxiety-producing for the developing child. Beth's references to having been shocked, amazed, bewildered, and "absolutely frightened out of my wits" underscore this dimension.

2. Valid information dispels fear. Repeated mention is made that accurate information from trusted parental sources alleviated earlier anxieties bit by bit. Finally, Beth could say, "I'm not frightened about it anymore at all, because I understand it better."

3. Youth are aware that peer information is questionable. Aware of the shaky nature of answers from uninformed peers, Beth took such information with a grain of salt, then turned to her parents for clarification. Youth whose parents are silent on the matter, though, generally must turn to one another.

4. Secretiveness about sex engenders suspicion. This youthful "expert" thought all children should know about sex by age 10 or 12. When parents adopt a hesitant or silent approach on dispensing sexual information, it seems natural for their offspring to be curious, wondering why they would need to wait until they were older to learn and feeling that their parents did not trust them.

5. Repeated conversations about sex are needed. Bit by bit the understanding develops. Bernstein (1976 and 1980) believes that thought processes mature in a spiral fashion, with children returning again and again to a concept, but at higher and higher levels. Beth's suggestion that she "understood" but could not "explain" the signs of sexual maturation for males indicates a need for further discussions for clarification, expansion, and solidification of information and concepts.

6. Children need full information by age 10 or 12. Beth's opinion is in agreement with many experts in sex education. Interestingly, she felt that, if children didn't ask by age 12, parents should take the initiative and inform them.

The concepts and information discussed in the diaglogue indicate that, by age 13, a child can, indeed, "put it all together" (Bernstein, 1980), perhaps because cognitive development is now reaching its highest levels. The concepts are clarified, the information is fairly valid, and a basic philosophy is established. Both authors offer this dialogue segment in the hope that it will, by various avenues, foster more such parent-child discussions on meaningful levels.

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PARENTS' ROLES IN SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING

by

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A valuable resource, parents of school children, exists in every community. While the schools involve parents to a certain extent in organizational activities, they profit little from the depth and breadth of knowledge parents have for assisting with curriculum work. This paper proposes to examine one dimension of parental involvement in schools: curriculum decision-making. Much is made of parental objection to various aspects of school curriculum, but not much has been said of parental involvement in the curriculum development process.

While many different means are employed by educators to provide formal learning experiences for school-aged youngsters, it is not the purpose of this paper to examine them. Rather, the focal point of this article is to establish the rationale for, and the means by which parents can be shareholders in curriculum development processes through which school programs evolve.

The process must result in programs which are responsive to the needs of the child. Additionally, the programs must be successful in achieving the goals of the school and school system in terms of overall student growth. Any decision to move into new curriculum or school organization must be based in the knowledge of the community.

Many motives drive a school system to curriculum development. Regardless of these, several important steps must be considered in the decision-making and planning stages. Operationalizing these steps in a thoughtful manner is of utmost importance in order to insure success of the venture. In this regard, parents have a responsibility to be involved in each step of this process. Often, it becomes a difficult task for school system personnel to raise a level of awareness in parents for the important work involved in curricular decision-making. No matter, every avenue must be explored to make opportunities available for participation. Those individuals or groups usually involved in the decision-making process are:

1. School Board Members
2. Superintendent of Schools
3. Curriculum Supervisors
4. Principals
5. Teachers
6. Students
7. Parents

No decision-making priority is intended in the manner in which the list of persons is ordered. However, the list does represent an authority/ responsibility ladder in regard to accountability for implementing program decisions. While parents rank last in the hierarchy in the list above, they hold a priority position in terms of responsibility for fiscal support of schools; all the most reason for obtaining their involvement in "decision-ing."

Parents assume an important role in helping to provide information and feedback to the decision-making process. Their practical experience, formal and informal training, and perspectives of school from the parental viewpoint make them invaluable in assisting school personnel in making decisions regarding a number of important aspects of school programs. In this respect, parents are a valued asset and resource. As a sounding board for plans involving curriculum, programs, as well as school organization, scheduling, transportation, pupil evaluation, teacher assessment, and program evaluation, parents provide important information for these and a host of other important planning aspects.

Three major areas of parental involvement are seen to comprise the major components of the decision-making process: (1) Assets Assessments: (2) Assessing Needs; and (3) Curriculum and Program Development. In these areas, parents are important, not only for their opinions and perceptions regarding the work at hand, but also for the expertise which they bring to the situation. Parent contributions to the decision-making process help to steer a course of planning which will avoid much of the anxiety and anguish which often preceeds and is inherent in an ambiance of institutional change.

I. Assets Assessment. It is easy to overlook resources which a school or school system has which can facilitate the new program. Parents are one of these resources. Other assets exist but are sometimes passed over. For example, there may be teachers already employed by the school system who have an interest in and knowledge of the area of curricular revision. These persons can be invited to become a cadre or nucleus from which a staff development can be launched. Personnel resources are the most valuable assets of any school system. A firm commitment from all personnel areas, instructiona administrative, and custodial, are most vital to the success of any new program. Where parents are concerned, their commitment to stand behind the school system in its planned change is obviously going to assist in making a smooth transition. When faculty and administration perceive parental backing, commitments are made and effort is generated to keep them.

II. Assessing Needs. Many individuals or groups participate in the needs assessment. Most of these have been identified previously. Each, however, can provide, from a different perspective, information which will be useful in the planning stages. Examples of areas to be explored in order to determine school system needs are:

1. Instructional personnel resources
2. Administrative or leadership resources
3. Teachers (competencies, knowledge, skills, attitudes, development)
4. Curriculum
5. Processes by which the program is implemented
6. Evaluation plan
7. Pupils
8. Facilities

Each of the above are legitimate areas for parental involvement. Working along with school personnel, parents are able to internalize the resources and constraints the school system has to work with.

III. Program Development. Interestingly enough, it is a rare occurrence when parents are involved in program development and/or implementation. Advisory boards, consisting of representative parents, teachers, students, and administrators of a school can act as a source for advise, counsel, and evaluation. During implemention, it is especially useful to obtain information from many different publics in regard to new program effectiveness. The advisory board makes recommendations and assists in the decision-making process and recommends a course of action. Participation in this level of decision-making heightens parental awareness of the successes, failures, and difficulties inherent in program implementation.

The author has only alluded to other types of parental involvement such as study groups, volunteers, and PTA/PTO. These groups represent a relatively weak power base for decision-making. The case for active participation by parents in the ongoing activities of decisioning in school systems from a position of strength has been made. It is the right of parents to be on the "cutting edge." Successful school programs depend on it.

COORDINATING/TRAINING/UTILIZING PARENT VOLUNTEERS

by

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Concerned efforts of school staff and parents brought volunteers to the public schools in Clarke County, Athens, Georgia. Realizing the need for more direct parent involvement in the public school system, individuals in the county accepted the challenge of recruiting, coordinating, training and utilizing parent volunteers. This article will discuss two volunteer programs that were implemented in this school district.

Overview

In 1971-72 Barnett Shoals Elementary School sought and received federal funding for Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS). This program was exciting to many of the people who had worked hard to initiate a "shoe-string" volunteer program in the school the previous year. The new VIPS program included money for the following:

1. Salaried 20 hour director
2. Salaried 20 hour coordinator
3. Stipend money for 20 volunteers who would agree to approximately 50 hours of intensive training
4. Money for materials
5. Money for training program which consisted of three college level courses: Special Problems in Elementary Education; Elementary Reading: Child Psychology. Not only did the volunteers receive the college-credit courses, but they also received supplementary training in areas such as art, music, and physical education.

For this one year of federal funding, the program was an ideal situation. Since that time the volunteer program has survived the termination of the funding, three principals, several neighborhood zoning changes, and an intense field based university teacher training program that sends 30-40 students to the school daily. The volunteer program at Barnett Shoals is still in operation, and the relationship between teacher and volunteer continues to be mutually beneficial.

Another volunteer program also began seven years ago in a different Clarke County School. At Gaines Elementary School 10 concerned parents who were able to volunteer a few hours a week started a pilot program. Initially, the volunteers tutored in reading; they met once a week with the school reading specialist to discuss the students they were helping and to learn about available games and activities which might assist them in tutoring. Eventually the program expanded to include math., art, library, office work, etc. This program is also functioning successfully.

Coordinating

At the inception of the Barnett Shoals program, the PTA chose to sponsor VIPS. Therefore, support was not an immediate factor in organizing and coordinating the volunteer program. During the fall of 1971, several neighborhood coffees were held in the evening. Mothers and fathers came to these coffees to talk about the new school year and learn about the VIPS program. These coffees were highly successful in explaining the volunteer program. Later, an orientation meeting was held at the school to all those who thought they would be interested in volunteering. Further publicity came from flyers, newspaper articles, and by "word of mouth."

Once people were recruited it became necessary to coordinate the volunteer programs. What did the schools want? What did the volunteers want to do? At both schools, understanding the needs of the situation was crucial. The coordinators at Gaines and Barnett Shoals distributed a Volunteer Information Form to interested parents at the beginning of the school year to determine the placement of volunteers. This questionnaire asked pertinent information about interests, hobbies, and willingness to volunteer. These forms were filed and updated as needed. In the actual scheduling of the volunteers, many factors are considered, such as children at home, experience, teacher needs, etc. Various bookkeeping measures were used to coordinate the placement of volunteers.

In order to determine the needs of the teachers, another questionnaire was distributed. The teachers checked the areas in which they desired to help. A matrix was compiled in order to determine the number of volunteers needed in each specific area. The majority of the volunteers had no problem with placement other than occasionally changing times to meet the teacher's schedules.

One feature of coordination that should be stressed is "flexibility." In coordinating teachers and volunteers, each teacher and volunteer should be spoken to personally to determine their needs. If a teacher mainly wants and needs someone to type, a volunteer who prefers to work with children should not be placed with him/her. The coordinator should also refrain from scheduling teachers with the parents of their students. Volunteers agreed that this would not be in the best interest of all concerned.

A very important aspect of coordinating volunteers is the expectation of their being professional. As part of being professional, they should be:

1) dependable and responsible
2) enthusiastic and eager to accomplish their task
3) discreet--any information they learn at school is not for neighborhood gossip.

Moreover, prospective volunteers should be made aware of the following necessary qualifications during the recruitment: good health; love for children and ability to relate with them; flexibility; friendliness; patience; optimistic personality; and a sense of humor.

Training

Ideally, the parent volunteer should receive a minimum of two hours training in the school and volunteer program; 6 hours training in tutoring; 15-45 minutes weekly with a specialist in a particular area, such as reading, if possible.

If this is not possible, then the minimum training should be a discussion of expectation of his/her role as well as specific concerns. Frequent teacher-volunteer meetings should be stressed. These could be done at the end of the school day or during a teacher's break, but not during his/her teaching time. A training program will not cease after a particular number of hours; it must be a continuous process. Parents must feel secure and appreciated; therefore, they need frequent feedback and reinforcement for their efforts. Specific humanistic strategies to improve communication between parents and staff are outlined in Parents and Teachers (Wilson, 1974).

Utilizing

With the direction and guidance of the teacher, the parent volunteer should do the following:

1. Help the child develop a positive self-concept and self-worth by complimenting him or his appearance, his thinking and his work.

2. Show acceptance of the child by listening to what he has to say.

3. Help the child develop a positive attitude toward learning by giving him learning tasks which he is able to perform and telling him that he has performed them well.

4. Encourage the child to continue to respond to difficult materials by being receptive rather than berating him for his mistakes.

5. Understand the reasons why the child is having trouble learning.

Most volunteers came to school on a regular basis. They would contact the school if they were unable to volunteer on a particular day. Volunteers signed an in/out book which helped to determine the number of monthly hours worked.

Besides the regularly scheduled volunteers, there were many people who wanted to help but could not schedule themselves on a regular basis. These people were placed in an "on-call" file for special projects during the year. Some even did typing or game-making in their home for the teachers.

Name tags made especially for the volunteers were worn, so that the students and school personnel would know them. It is very important that the school personnel genuinely welcome the volunteers andmake them feel wanted. Christmas notes are a thoughtful way to remember their contributions or certificates with toal number of hours volunteered might be presented to each volunteer at the end of the year.

Follow-up

The parent volunteer programs have been considered successful by the volunteers, teachers, and administrators at Barnett Shoals and Gaines Elementary Schools. Volunteers felt that they were of assistance to the teacher and that they were helping individual children. Based on the results of the evaluation forms, the math and reading skills were improved as well as the self-concept of many children. Even though there is a lack of research concerning the effects of parent involvement, this factor should not deter school staff who want to involve parents in their school. "Rather, it should encourage them to establish their programs with an evaluation component which will yield information useful to other groups planning the same approach" (Scriven, 1976, p.5f).

Conclusion

In addition to the direct results of the Parent Volunteer Program, the education provided by the Clarke County School System should be enhanced by the mere fact that parents and schools are working together. Parents are becoming better informed about the strengths and weaknesses of their school and school system with the end result being to the advantage of the children in Clarke County.

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HELPING PARENTS SET THE STAGE FOR SUCCESS IN READING

by

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Pity the poor parents of a pre-school youngster who, being the type that wish to help their children become successful readers, have been caught in the changing currents of educational theory, told about practical and impractical approaches, read conflicting research, and are pressured by the media, parent-teacher organizations, and other well-meaning organizations, to try different techniques-still try to assist the schools in this most important process. On one hand they have been warned by educators to let the educational institutions handle everything, and on the other, they are bombarded by articles that tell them that their children are being penalized by not knowing such things as the names of the letters, phonics rules, etc. and in many cases are being urged to start teaching their children with a formal structured reading program even before they enter school. For the lack of definitive research in the area of pre-school reading both parents and teachers have been left in a state of confusion as to what can or should be done to help the child before he enters school. This article will suggest some ideas based on current thinking and research that will give the parents specific things they can do and perhaps keep them from impeding reading growth of their children. It is just as important to prevent parents from placing barriers to good reading as it is to help children learn how to read. Some of these barriers will be discussed along with specific ideas to help pre-school and primary grade children become fluent readers.

Since most parents are the products of a skills-centered developmental approach typically using basal readers and related materials, they are more familiar with this type of approach, and in view of the current emphasis on "back to basics" are likely to turn to the specific skills that they remember from their early reading experiences to help their children. Discussion with parents of what is called the "whole-language" approach based on psycholinguistic theory would balance this point of view and prevent certain barricades to the reading process from being developed.

Frank Smith (1979),a noted psycholinguistic theoriest, gives several strategies which teachers would do well not to follow. Smith says that we should not aim for the early mastery of the rules of reading. In the first place there are no definite rules. His main point seems to be that people learn to read through reading - not by a set of rules. The practice of parents drilling children on words, or worse the letters and their sounds in words,causes reading to be much more difficult than it should it. Likewise the parent who being oversold on phonics by such

proponents as Rudolph Flesch and others is apt to have the child sound out words that they don't know. This forces the child to try to remember dozens of rules and their exceptions and makes reading a tedious and difficult task. Despite what basal authorities say about developing independence in word attack skills, there is nothing wrong with parents telling the child the word. Before I am taken to task for such heresy, let me say that this is the way that many of us learned to read. Leland Jacobs, a well-known poet and author, was told by his mother just to use the word teakettle everytime he came to a word he didn't know and to go on with the story--he would get enough out of the context to get the meaning of the word and the story. He claims to have learned to read by "tea-kettling" his way through. Such use of the context of a sentence to decode an unknown word is nothing new. It is the way that most fluent readers attack an unknown word.

Another implied activity that could be done by parents is to read to children and let the child follow along in the book. This would be especially important after the child had learned to read books. The child would tend to follow a good model and at the same time learn to predict what word or idea was coming next. This ability to make hypotheses about what the next word or phrase will be helps the child see that people read to make sense. The parent should make sure that the child can see the words and pictures as they read to them.

Warn parents that word-perfect reading is not necessarily good and that teachers and classmates who are prone to jump in immediately when a child hesitates before a word, or when he mispronounces a word, are robbing the child of a chance to use the words both before and after the unknown word and are causing the child to be afraid to read for meaning. They emphasize that the child has made an error and begin to build up anxiety. In some cases the word substituted may be just as meaningful. "Said John," means the same as "John said" and it makes little difference whether the reader says he "climbed the ladder" or he "climbed up the ladder."

Teachers often send home the new basal vocabulary either on cards or ditto sheets and these in most cases are drilled on in isolation. This makes reading nonsense and extremely difficult, according to Smith. One of his main arguments stresses that reading should be interesting to the child and always make sense. Isolated drill is nonsense!

Beware of the "hot" words in reading that try to explain away a child's reading difficulty. First of all the child comes to see himself as a reading problem which builds up anxiety which is the greatest cause of reading problems. We are far too prone to use labels--minimal brain disfunction, dyslexia, learning disability and their ilk are educational pedaguese not only scare parents, give the teacher a ready rationalization for the child not learning to read, but develop anxiety in the child about his own ability to learn to read. Anxiety is considered one of the primary causes of reading difficulties.

Both teachers and parents should be told to put the child in a book that is easy and interesting. Reading must make sense to the child and must be in his understanding of the world. If the book is too difficult for him

to use his knowledge of the world and the language he speaks, it is going to be far too difficult for him to read.

Generally psycholinguistic theory depends heavily on the concept that what the child brings to reading or "what's behind the eyes" is much more important than what's printed on the paper. This infers experiences and developing a child's knowledge of the world and his understanding of his language is the most important factor in learning to read. Smith (1979) and Goodman (1968) stress that a child's understanding of the semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic systems of our language is basic in reading. They say that we don't teach children to read but that we arrange their environment so that they "learn to read." While most of the three systems above are learned intuitively and through experience, we should dwell on setting the stage so that a child gets a chance to use them. Reading materials that are interesting and within the child's level of comprehension play a large part in psycholinguistic theory. Theorists suggest that parents set up an environment to give the child experiences through which he can learn how the language system operates or to use the understandings he already has.

One concept that Frank Smith stresses is that we should help children see why we read what we read. He believes that the child must deal with all types of reading in an answer-getting or problem-solving situation in a very functional sense long before he enters school.

To the teacher and parent this suggests using the everyday problems of life to teach the multi-faceted process of reading. The child must see that labels on items in the grocery answer a question for us. The television guide tells us the time and programs available. Even television commercials suggest a reason for reading. In short, Smith is suggesting that the young child through such experiences and exposure gains the understanding of what letters, words, numbers and other symbols mean in a functional way. Parents then should be encouraged to help children see the relationship between these and what they tell us. Helping the child become aware of how we extract information from all types of reading material to answer specific questions that we ask is a very important concept indeed. Children should be given ample opportunities to see adults "read" letters, forms, advertisements, street signs, directions, menus, newspapers, telephone books, dictionaries, and a multitude of materials other than books. Adults who read such materials to children and explain what they get from them are setting the stage for a child's understanding of the nature of reading. Without being taught children will do some of this reading on their own.

Smith suggests some fundamental insights that a child can develop by the parent or teacher setting the environment in such a way that the child learns them.

The insight that printed symbols have meaning is considered basic. This cannot be taught to the child but he comes to know it by discovery such as learning that MEN on the lavatory door has a different meaning from WOMEN. The child that makes this discovery has learned

that something in the way the word is printed makes a difference. Inherent in this understanding is the idea that words are broken down into letters that have some relationships to spoken language. This is what Goodman (1965) calls the graphophonic system of our language. Another understanding related to this is the understanding that print is language.

The way in which children come to develop these understandings is by observing print and watching what people do in relation to it. Being surrounded by print, he watches others reactions to it, and learns to answer such questions by watching others and by experimenting with his environment. Going into the wrong restroom teaches him very quickly that he misinterpreted the print on the door. It seems unnecessary that children's kindergarden rooms have a symbol of a boy or girl when a sign would accomplish the same thing and teach a very important concept about reading.

Parents and teachers can help in this process not by teaching children "how to read" but by doing these things suggested and by reading signs and other print forms along with the child. Things can be read to children and helping them solve their problems using print as the key. Thus parents should be encouraged to read to children and show what the print means or what it tells them that is important. Smith (1979) points out that once children can read such things on their own they become very impatient with adults who try to read it to them. They do not want someone to read to them what they can read for themselves. Parents should be told when to "back off" and let the child function for himself.

Some specific activities that would help the parent are given below:

1. Read to the child as often as possible observing the following guidelines:

   a. The reading must be interesting to the child and, therefore, within his level of understanding.

   b. Use "predictable books" as often as possible. These give the child a feeling of the patterns set up by some authors and enables him to predict what the next word, line, or complete page will say.

   c. Stop periodically and ask the child what he thinks the next word might be or what he things will happen next. This enables the child to use his predicting and hypothesizing ability and enables him to fit the story into his understanding of the language patterns, syntax, semantics, and indeed his view of the world. By all means, if he wants to read the next line or even the next page encourage him. This will let him feel the success of reading by himself.

d. Use as many different types of print material as possible. This shows the child that reading is not limited to books but includes such things as television guides, newspapers, magazines, comics, directions, recipes, signs, catalogs, etc.

e. In the beginning point to the words as you say them. This gives the child the idea that you are getting meaning from the symbols on the page and that reading moves in a left-to-right direction. This should not be continued after the child has developed an understanding of the relationship, however, since he will be limited in reading speed to the speed with which he moves his finger.

f. Read many different styles of writing. This shows the child the difference between "talic" and "reading" and helps him understand the pecularity of reading and the idiosyncracies of authors.

2. Help the child build his own personal library of books that he is interested in. Research indicates that children who have their own library read much more and much faster than those without their own library.

3. Accompany the child to the library and help him select books he can read and discuss those with him after he has read them. (Care should be taken that this is not a forced discussion or a quiz.)

4. Give the child experiences. He must build up his own view of world in order to have something to test his hypotheses while reading. Something can't "make sense" unless he has a standard to compare it with. Unless he has had experiences with language in many different situations he will not be able to use the redundancy theory or overlapping of information from various sources. Semantic and syntactic information is built up by these activities where he learns that things make sense and that language is used in a certain way. Orthographic information or spelling patterns comes through experiences with print while reading or being read to.

5. Let your child see you and other members of the family read for enjoyment. Discussion of what one has read builds up the concept of reading being enjoyable rather than work and presents it as a worthwhile leisure activity.

Impediments to reading should be discussed in adult education classes aimed at parents of pre-school children. They should be made aware of these pitfalls. The parent who might be placing barriers in the child's way to fluent reading would do the following:

1. Teach him spelling rules or phonic rules.
2. Focus on individual letters when trying to help the child learn a difficult word.
3. Correct the child everytime he makes a mistake.
4. Drill the child on isolated words whether in a list or on cards.
5. Discourage guessing about unknown words.
6. Encourage him to remember everything he reads.
7. Give him books you thought were great when you were his age.
8. Insist on him reading only in "books".
9. Buy him extra workbooks in phonics or other skills.
10. Make him feel that he has a reading problem.
11. Warn him that he must learn to read in order to be worthwhile as often as possible.
12. Insist that he bring home his reader for more practice.
13. Know all the answers - He'll never bother to try if he expects you to solve all the problems.
14. Never tell him a word - Take five minutes to show him how to sound it out, use structural analysis, etc.

Some sources of information that the instructor should make available to parents is shown below. Many of these will give further information on how parents can help. For the fairly well educated parent, Smith's book Reading Without Nonsense is highly recommended.

Sources of Information for Parents

These were taken from the International Reading Association's publication News for Parents.

Booklist-Publications for Parents

The following booklist was compiled by Gloria Smith, librarian at International Reading Association Headquarters. The publications listed here are guides for parents in helping their children become readers.

1. Children's Reading in the Home by May Hill Arbuthnot, Scott, Foresman.

2. Reading Begins at Home by Dorothy Butler and Marie Clay, Heinemann.

3. Books and the Teenage Reader: A Guide for Teachers, Librarians and Parents (2nd revised edition) by Robert Carlsen, Harper and Row.

4. Books for You: A Booklist for Senior High Students, Kenneth Donelson, ed., National Council of Teachers of English.

5. A Parent's Guide to Children's Reading (4th edition) by Nancy Larrick, Doubleday.

6. Su nino y la lectura: Como usted puede ayudar, Houghton Mifflin.

7. Children and Books (5th edition) by Zena Sutherland and May Hill Arbuthnot, Scott, Foresman.

8. Preparing Your Child for Reading by Miles Tinker, McGraw-Hill.

9. IRA series of ten micromonographs for parents. Single copies of each are available from the International Reading Association at a prepaid cost of US$.35 for IRA individual members and US$.50 for others.

10. Parents and Reading, Carl Smith ed., IRA. Available at a prepaid cost of US$3.50 for IRA individual members and US$5.00 for others.

11. Helping Children Read: Ideas for Parents, Teachers, and Librarians, Susan Glazer and Carol Brown, eds., New Jersey Reading Association. Available for US$6.00 + $.50 postage. Contact: Anne Ferrara, 202 Morningside Drive, Trenton, New Jersey 08618. Make checks payable to New Jersey Reading Association.

Micromonograph Available

"How Can I Help My Child Build Positive Attitudes toward Reading?" is the title of a new micromonograph published by the International Reading Association. Written by Susan Mandel Glazer, this 12-page booklet describes ways in which parents can help their children develop an interest in reading. Specific activities are recommended, and the micromonograph includes a booklist of good books for children of various ages.

Sincle copies of "How Can I Help My Child Build Positive Attitudes toward Reading?" are available at a prepaid cost of US$.35 for IRA individual members and US$.50 for others. Write: International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Road, P. O. Box 8139, Newark, Delaware 19711, USA.

Parents As Reading Partners

Realizing the importance of parents in the educational process, several states have launched campaigns to actively involve parents in the education of their children. New York State's "Parents as Reading Partners" program encourages parents to read with their children for at least 15 minutes a day. The program is supported by Commissioner Gordon M. Ambach of the State Education Department and by educational organizations, schools, libraries and businesses. It has also been endorsed by sports figures such as Arthur Ashe, Julius Erving, Ron Guidry, Bobby Orr and Roger Staubach.

More than 800 schools and libraries throughout the state have started "Parents As Reading Partners" programs. The program emphasizes the role of parents in encouraging children to read, and it also stresses that reading can be fun for youngsters.

"We know that parents are a child's first teachers," says New York State Senator James H. Donovan, chairman of the Senate Education Committee. "That's why we want parents to take a few minutes out of each day to sit down with their child and a book--to pave the child's road to good education."

Single copies of two brochures for parents, "Just 15 Minutes" and "Join the Top of the Hill Gang," are available free by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Parents As Reading Partners Committee, Room 708, Legislative Office Building, Albany, New York 12247, USA. Also available to teachers and libraries is a packet of materials on how to start a "Parents As Reading Partners" program.

A discussion of these theories and supplying parents with these materials should help ease young children into reading showing them how reading functions and that it is an enjoyable meaning-getting process rather than a series of isolated drills on skills that we hope the child can bring together as a total person.

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1. Goodman, Kenneth S. (Ed.) The Psycholinguistic Nature of the Reading Process. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968.

2. Smith, Frank. Reading Without Nonsense. Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1979.

PARENT PARTICIPATION IN DAY CARE

by

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Day care in America is a growing phenomenon. During the past decade more children than ever before have attended full-day early childhood programs. Many of these children are under two years of age; while the majority are between the ages of three and six. Many of these children spend forty or more hours per week in these programs. As a consequence of the growing participation and development of these programs, many children spend their early years* in the care of adults other than their parents. Since the early years are considered to be crucial to the child's total development, it is essential that administrators of full-day early childhood programs recognize the importance of the family as a significant element in the total development of children. This seems to be a reasonable idea; however, many full-day programs have not modified their programming, policies, and schedules to meet the needs of working parents.

Parent participation as a concept. Parent participation as a concept in education is not new. Parents have usually been encouraged to participate in schools in nonthreatening ways through Parent Night, Open House, and Parent Conferences. Respect for the needs and rights of the parent and child evolved as a result of the 1960's Civil Rights Movement when minority parents began to demand equality in educational practices for their children. These demands led to community control of schools, community school boards, and the parents' rights movement. In Early Childhood Education, parent involvement was mandated as a component of all Head Start Programs (1965). According to the philosophy of Head Start, parents were considered indispensable to the success of the program because they were usually the closest people to the child and were instrumental in shaping the child's world. Head Start parents were also involved in decision making which related to the planning and operation of the program. Head Start has provided the foundation for parent involvement and participation in Early Childhood Education. The concept of parent involvement as defined by Head Start has continued and is mandated by federal guidelines for day care programs. The 1979 Federal Interagency Day Care Requirements mandated that: "Parents have an opportunity to work with the program, observe their children, and become involved in making decisions concerning the nature and operation of the day care facility." Likewise, the new proposed 1980 Federal Interagency Day Care Requirement guidelines also require:

a. centers to inform parents about the day care program and to regularly offer parents opportunities to observe their children, meet with caregivers, and advise and comment on their children's needs.

*Ages 0-6

b. centers to allow parents opportunities to see monitoring and evaluation reports made by Federal, State, and Local authorities, and applications by Federal, State, or Local funds.

c. state agencies to provide information and technical assistance to Day Care facilities on working parents and to offer parents their choice of facility whenever administratively feasible.

According to the proposed guidelines these requirements can be achieved in numerous ways such as having a Parent Advisory Group; holding bi-monthly or bi-yearly meetings; or having parent representation on the Board of Directors of the Day Care Center.

While concept of parent involvement and parent participation has been delineated by the federal government, the actual implementation has frequently been inadequate. Often teachers and administrators are not sensitive and responsive to the needs of working parents. Generally, it is assumed that parents will become involved in the program if they are interested in their children. If they do not become involved, it is assumed that the parent is not interested. It is my belief that most parents are interested in their children's welfare and will participate and become involved in many aspects if they are given the opportunity. Giving parents the opportunity means actively encouraging them to participate.

Parent participation as a reality. Parent participation and involvement in day care is essential since many children spend so many of their early growing years in these programs. They also develop attitudes, values, and beliefs about the world in which they live. It seems that since many children spend so much time in day care or full-day programs that parents should be encouraged whenever possible, to interact with their children. Instead, many day care centers discourage the participation of parents. Usually, the justification which is used is: "Working parents do not have the time. If they did, their children would not be in day care. Parents might not have the time; however, if they are encouraged to participate, they usually will find the time. There are several ways in which parents can be encouraged to participate in early childhood programs.

First, and foremost, an appreciation and consideration of the child's culture is a necessary prerequisite to parent participation. Often parents feel less comfortable in a center where teachers and/or administrators do not recognize their culture as being important. For example, often teachers and administrators view lower class families, minority families, single parent families and non-English speaking families differently from the traditional two-parent middle class white family. Administrators and/or

teachers are less likely to take the concerns of non-traditional families seriously. For example, a teacher might criticize the language while overlooking the content of a note which is written in non-standard English. In other instances, a teacher and/or administrator might avoid calling a lower-class or minority parent about a problem which his/her child might have, based on the assumption that the lower class parent is not interested in his/her child's welfare. Teachers and administrators could begin to talk more to parents about what they want for their children and how they think these goals can be achieved. It is also important to understand whether or not the parents goals and the school goals are similar. If not, it is necessary to find some common ground from which to work. Teachers and/or administrators should not assume that they know what is best for all children. In addition, educators just begin to recognize that most families have certain values, attitudes, and beliefs about their children and their children's development and that these values and beliefs are legitimate because they have contributed to the continual survival of that cultural group.

Second, the program must provide an atmosphere which is inviting and encourages parent participation and involvement. Usually, this goal is achieved by providing parents with an area in the Center where they can interact with each other, the teacher, administrator, and even their children. Books, toys, and other resources should be provided for a parent education program which is based on the needs and interests of the parents and staff.

Third, parents should be encouraged to participate in the program by providing their children with "quality time." This can be achieved by encouraging parents to bring their children to the center a little later if they have a morning off from work and to pick the child up earlier if they leave work early. Parents can also be encouraged to take their children out of the center for lunch, which is usually a very speical activity for both parent and child. The amount of time that parents spend with their children should be a consideration of day care teachers and administrators; therefore, the structure of the day must be flexible so that parents can spend time with their children and not be penalized for bringing the child late or picking up the child early.

Fourth, the day care center should encourage parent participation in the usual manner by:

1. Having coffee hours for parents and staff. The day and time of the coffee hour should vary so that the center is responding to the variety in parents' schedules.

2. Encouraging parents to volunteer in classrooms.

3. Having open house during the day as well as at night.

4. Having pot luck suppers and lunches for parents and children.

5. Making visits to the child's home.

6. Having conferences with the parents about the child's progress.

In conclusion, parent participation and involvement in day care is essential since most full-day children spend most of their waking hours with adults other than their parents. It is essential that these programs provide opportunities for parents to interact with their children and with the people that "teach" their children.

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AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

by

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In-service and pre-service early childhood teachers need strengthened insights into the organization and management of parent education programs. It is no longer sufficient to rely only on the classroom experiences of small children for maximum development. The studies that show the importance of the home as the primary educational institution[1] give impetus to the need for programs that strengthen the parents in their day-by-day interactions with their children. Although there is need for parent education programs for all parents, the need is most urgent for the parents of small children. This need is emphasized by studies such as those of Benjamin Bloom[2] which indicate that it is in the formative years that children are acquiring the large part of their attitudes and intellectual foundations.

There is not an easy cookbook recipe for parent education programs, because each program needs to be planned for the particular group it is intended to serve. Also, the style of the leader in parent education needs to be considered. Some leaders will prefer a program that is highly structured, with step-by-step instructions for a series of parent meetings. Other leaders will wish a more flexible program, that can flow out of the discussions and the felt needs of each parent group. In between these extremes of structured and flexible programs is a continuum of various resource guides, some based on a transactional analysis approach, some based on Adlerian principles, and some reflecting "issue by issue" types of dealing with childrearing practices.

It is the purpose of this article to survey the body of literature pertaining to parent education programs. Teachers who are familiar with available parent education materials will be more aware of strategies for dealing with parents of the children in their classrooms.

The Adlerian Approach

For the teacher who has not had experience in conducting parent education programs in the past, there is a program with many supportive aids. This program, called Systematic Training for Effective Parenting, is published by American Guidance Service, Circles Pines, MI. 55014.

It includes plans for nine sessions of approximately two hours each, and gives posters, charts, and audio cassettes. Individual parent books can be purchased. It is a structured program, written by Don Dinkmeyer and Gary McKay, and is based on the Rudolph Dreikurs approach, which was, in turn, based on the works of Dr. Alfred Adler.

An earlier work in the Adlerian tradition is Dr. Rudolph Dreikurs' Children The Challenge, a book which has been used widely in parent education groups. This program offers a variety of ways to approach the solution of family conflicts. "Democracy" and "equality" are key words used in this approach. Parents, according to this thinking, must now stimulate and encourage their children into voluntarily taking their part in the maintenance of order. Among the topics presented are: the fallacy of punishment and reward, the use of natural and logical consequences, elimination of criticism, minimization of mistakes, sidestepping the struggle for power, care in pleasing, the courage to say "no," and consistent follow-through. The last chapter is the recommendation of the family council, so that issues can be resolved in a problem-solving atmosphere.

There are a number of Dreikurs' books that make good bases for valuable parent education discussion groups.

The Transactional Analysis Approach

Based on Eric Berne's Games People Play, Dr. Thomas Harris wrote I'm O.K., You're O.K. which is a good basis for studying the way persons relate to one another. It can be a helpful parent education book in that it gives family members ways of recognizing and describing their own reactions to one another. For instance it gives the description of the three ego states, "parent," "child," and "adult," so that family members can discuss their statements in terms of the ego state from which they came. While "parent" statements tend to be dogmatic, and "child" statements tend to be "whiney," the "adult" state simply records and tests facts with a mature "problem-solving" approach. The book also helps identify the four positions of "I'm o.k, you're not o.k."; "I'm not o.k., you're not o.k.," "I'm not o.k., you're o.k.", and "I'm o.k., you're o.k." According to Dr. Harris, only the latter of these four makes for constructive relationships.

There are two books for children based on the transactional analysis approach: T.A. For Tots and T.A. For Teens, both by Dr. Alvyn Freed.

A book based on the transactional analysis approach with gestalt activities is Born To Win by Murial James and Dorothy Jongeward. In this book, a winner is defined as the trustworthy, responsive and genuine member of society, contrasted with the "loser" who does not respond authentically.

The Haim Ginott Approach

The late Dr. Haim Ginott wrote two books, Between Parent and Child, and Between Parent and Teen-Ager. In both books, he gives practical guidance for concrete situations that inevitably occur daily in most families. While the books give specific advice, they also set forth basic principles to guide parents in living with children in mutual respect and dignity. Highlights of the book Between Parent and Child are: conversing with children; new ways of praise and criticism; avoiding self-defeating patterns; responsibility and independence; discipline, permissiveness and limits; jealousy; sex education; and the need for professional help. The book can be read by parents and discussed in group meetings. Because it is one of the original parent education resources it has some out-dated "sex-biased" illustrations, but otherwise it is a classic in the field of parent education. A popular work based on the Ginott approach is Liberated Parents, Liberated Children, by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish.

For Parents of Very Small Children

The First Three Years of Life by Burton White was written because the author feels that not more than one child in ten gets off to as good a start in life as he could. However, with help, parents can do a quite credible childrearing job. The book gives this kind of help.

The book is subdivided into learning or developmental stages. The author gives approximate age levels and developmental milestones marking the passage into a higher stage. At each stage, the author gives information about the child's abilities and interests as well as recommendations for practices and materials that will significantly enhance development. Some materials cited are objects found around the home and other materials that are relatively inexpensive. The approach is to let the child explore the home in safety, with a parent talking to the child, reading to the child, loving and holding the child. Restrictive devices are shown to be detrimental.

Parenting Skills for Fathers

Dr. Fitzhugh Dodson has written not only How To Parent but also How To Father. The main topics in the latter book are grouped by age levels and give special attention to fathers and discipline, divorce and re-marriage, and blended families. The need to allow the child to explore, and to be self-regulating is stressed, along with the development of the sense of trust. There is a chapter on drug abuse relating the need for a strong parent-child relationship as the best defense. The approach is based on love, openness, and importance of developing a strong positive self-concept.

The P.E.T. Approach

Parent Effectiveness Training by Dr. Thomas Gordon is probably more useful with parents of adolescents and teenagers than with parents of very small children. Help with communication skills, clues for "active listening" and twelve typical responses of improper communication are included in the book. Areas of acceptance and non-acceptance and how individuals differ in their levels of tolerance are discussed. The "no lose" method of conflict resolution is probably the greatest strength of the P.E.T. approach. Another facet of the program is clues for determining "who owns the problem" so that parents are not constantly wrestling with issues that are best left for the youth to resolve, yet are confronting the issues that directly affect the well-being of the parent.

The Behaviorist Approach

The above titles are all written from the humanistic and developmental point of view. For a parent with a need to use behavior modification in connection with a specific problem there is the book by Krumboltz, Changing Children's Behavior. This is based on the Skinnerian principle of behavior modification. While it is written for school teachers and counselors, it can be used by parents.

Footnotes

[1]Nedler, S. E., and McAfee, O. D. Working With Parents: Guidelines for Early Childhood and Elementary Education, p. 14.

[2]Bloom, Benjamin. Stability and Change in Human Characteristics, p. 88.

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